



Weekend Gardener

A container-planted American lotus (*Nelumbo 'Momo Botan'*) rests in a sunken tub edged with stone. The plant's soil surface sits about 8 inches under water.

Watering Hole

Create an instant marsh to showcase a single plant or blend unusual water lovers into a perennial garden.

PHOTOGRAPH: KING AU



Planted in a tub of soil and sand, cattails add drama to Kristopher Dabner's perennial garden. A root feeder ensures a constant supply of water.

By incorporating a miniature marsh in your garden, you can grow water lilies, rushes, and other intriguing bog plants, even in arid climates. All you need, says Kristopher Dabner, garden designer and owner of The Greensman, a landscape design company in Kansas City, Missouri, is a simple plastic container and a hole big enough to accommodate it.

Start with a tub, mop bucket, or pond liner that is at least 27 inches in circumference and 18 inches deep, Kristopher says. Then, depending on the plants you plan to use, follow one of these two methods: For plants that prefer standing water, place container bog plants in the sunken tub, then cover them with water; for plants that don't like standing water, fill the tub with a mixture of half dirt and half sand, then root the plants directly in the mix, mulch thoroughly, and insert a root feeder for a constant water supply.

A marsh allows you to "introduce new textures into the landscape," Kristopher says, and to cultivate plants such as sweet flag (*Acorus calamus*) that won't grow in terrestrial gardens. For added interest, experiment with plants such as goatsbeard and hardy hibiscus, which tolerate high water levels. If you have standing water, you might introduce small feeder goldfish. □
For more information, turn to the Buyers' Guide on page 122.

WATER LOVERS

Kristopher Dabner lists a few of his favorite bog plants.

For standing water:

- Lotus plants, including American lotus (*Nelumbo lutea*), with creamy yellow petals, and *Nelumbo* 'Momo Botan,' a prolific semidwarf plant with red double blossoms.
- Hardy canna (*Thalia dealbata*), which grows 6 feet tall and has purple flowers.

- Small, hardy water lilies, such as *Nymphaea* 'Ellisiana,' with red blossoms, and *Nymphaea* × *helvola*, with soft yellow, star-shaped blooms.

- Small rushes, including twisted corkscrew rush (*Juncus effusus* 'Spiralis') and variegated zebra rush (*Scirpus* tab. *zebrinus*).

For sand and soil:

- Cattails, including narrow-leaved *Typha angustifolia* and dwarf *Typha minima*.
- Horsetail rush (*Equisetum hyemale*), with bamboo-like segmentations.
- *Gunnera manicata*, which has distinctive foliage and green bottlebrush flowers tinged with red.

For either condition:

- Aquatic varieties of iris, such as *Iris pseudacorus* and its variegated hybrid.
- Sweet flag (*Acorus calamus*), whose foliage resembles iris. The variegated species has dark green leaves with creamy white stripes.



Above, left to right: Dig a hole to accommodate your tub; level the bottom of the hole with a 1-inch layer of sand. Sink the tub so the rim sits approximately at ground level. Set a container-planted specimen in the tub; cover with water. Conceal the tub rim with layers of stone.