

# "Just Add Water"

Articles and Photos by Soni Forsman

## Batter bowl repurposed as water garden

A container water garden small enough to sit on a table? The idea began to percolate one cold January day several years ago as I walked the aisles of a discount department store. In the kitchen area, I spotted a large white bowl. Printing on the bottom identified it as a 10-inch batter bowl.

Always on the lookout for another container to make just one more water garden, I bought it. If a few small pieces of aquatic plants did not transform it into my vision, I would turn it back into a mixing bowl. I followed the thriller, filler and spiller formula, using a small piece or sliver of three different plants. It quickly matured into a petite water garden.

The following is the recipe I used for my first one. The original plant choices worked so well, I still use the same ones each year.

### Petite Water Garden Recipe

- Small bowl/container (10-inch batter bowl)
- 1 plastic pot that fits comfortably in the container (five- six-inch azalea pot)
- Sword-leaf rush (*Juncus ensifolius*), aka Japanese dwarf rush, broadleaf rush
- Red-stemmed parrot's feather (*Myriophyllum aquaticum* var. red-stemmed)
- Chameleon plant (*Houttuynia cordata*)
- Water hyacinth (*Eichhornia crassipes*) optional

Plant a sliver of the broadleaf rush, the chameleon plant and a couple pieces of the parrot's feather in the plastic pot filled with garden soil, **not** potting mix. Top off with small gravel and place into the bowl and fill with water. If using water hyacinth, tuck a young/small plant into the space between the inside pot and the bowl. I added fertilizer to the planting medium than occasionally dropped an aquatic fertilizer tab into the water to nourish the floater and the other plants.

Instead of the three plants, you could use just one or drop in a floating plant, water hyacinth or water lettuce. My plant choices are just suggestions. Experiment with others, keeping the size and number of plants in scale with the outer container. This is a project you could do with another gardener. An aquatic plant growing in a four-inch pot will probably be more plant than needed for one of these small water gardens unless it will be the one and only. Divide and share if using more.

### Descriptions of the plant I used

- **Sword-leaf rush** - Its broad slightly blue-green leaves produce dark brown seed heads, reaching a height of 12 inches.
- **Red-stemmed parrot's feather** – It is about one-half the size of the larger green variety with brilliant red stems. It is compact with more branching.
- **Chameleon plant** – Its green heart-shaped leaves are splashed with red and white, turning maroon in the fall. It has single white flowers.
- **Water hyacinth** – a favorite floater that likes full sun.



**Inner pot sits comfortably in the batter bowl,  
(with plenty of room for water around and over)**





**Mini water garden adorns an outdoor table.  
The heron sculpture is from a local art fair.  
Chameleon plant is visible near the heron's head  
Early fall- Spikelets arch under the weight of the maturing grain**