

Remaining unused fertilizer can be detrimental to dormant tubers during the winter months.

Dr. Sleamlarp Wasuwat from Thailand says it is important to note that feeding requirements are specific to the desired outcome. As it applies to N-P-K (nitrogen-phosphorus-potassium),

plants being grown for flowers should receive a higher K formula. Root-producing lotuses require a high N-P initially and a reduced N at maturity. Seed lotuses need high N and P.

Examples of popular commercial aquatic fertilizer formulas used for *Nymphaea* and *Nelumbo* are 10–26–10, 10–14–8, 20–14–8, and 12–20–8. In addition to N-P-K, 10 other nutrients are important to promote strong growth and flower formation. They include iron for lush green growth, boron to promote flower formation, and zinc to help regulate plant growth. Select a well-balanced and complete fertilizer whenever possible, including micronutrients.

Commercial aquatic plant fertilizers are available in most parts of the world but are manufactured for a number of different purposes and vary in their chemical composition (urea, ammonium, calcium nitrate, etc.). Raw materials are equally inconsistent depending on the source and/or duration of formulation. For example, manure, compost, and some manufactured fertilizers are high in soluble salts. Salts can pull moisture from the developing foliage and burn tubers or developing root growth. This is why waiting to add fertilizer until after strong growth begins to develop is critical. It is also important to start slowly. Add smaller amounts in the beginning and increase as plant growth increases. Selecting fertilizers specifically

