

The Sacred Lotus

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“No Mud, No Lotus” —*Thich Nhat Hanh*



The Sacred Lotus (*Nelumbo nucifera*) is a symbol of enlightenment, rebirth, and transformation in Buddhist traditions. The plant begins its life rooted in muddy waters, enduring challenging conditions until it eventually blossoms above the surface. Though the flower is pure, it could not exist without the mud beneath it.

In Buddhism, the lotus’s journey to the surface represents the soul’s quest towards inner peace. The mud symbolizes the suffering that is inherent to human existence, which is often easy to feel “stuck” in. The lotus pushes on through the challenge, not seeking to escape it, but to embrace it in order to grow. Upon winter, it dies and begins the journey again the next season. Thus is the cycle of life, death, and rebirth.

While this photo was taken at the 2024 Lotus and Water Lily Festival, I have more recently been feeling attached to the lotus in my personal life. In the mud that is human existence, we must remember that we all have the same capability—and opportunity—to blossom into our own interpretation of the Sacred Lotus.