WATER LILIES & LOTUS

HUMBER NURSERIES ‘GREEN THUMB GUIDE’


HARDY WATER LILIES

Hardy water lilies are perennial flowering plants that will bloom throughout the season. Most hardy lily flowers open about 9:00 am and close in mid-afternoon. Some varieties, such as Pink Sensation, Gonnera, and Escarboula will stay open later into the day.

FAVOURITE CHOICES OF HARDY LILIES

YELLOW
- Chromatella
  - 10-15 cm canary-yellow blooms.
  - Good for part shade, 20 cm leaves.
- Pygmaea Helvola
  - A dwarf yellow lily, stays open late, 5 cm blooms, 13 cm leaves.

RED
- Attraction
  - Opens a bright garnet red, deepening in colour each day to reach a rich crimson. 15-20 cm blooms, leaves 25-30 cm

RED/PINK
- Charles de Meurville
  - Dark reddish to pink 15 cm blooms, 25 cm leaves.

CHANGEABLE
- Comanche
  - Apricot becoming dark coppery bronze streaked with red. 15 cm blooms, 28 cm leaves.

WHITE
- Gladstone
  - Very large, white, cup shaped flowers. 18 cm blooms, 30 cm leaves.
- Marilac White
  - Sparkling white with yellow stamens. The flowers are fragrant. 15 cm bloom, 23 cm leaves.
- Odorata Alba
  - Large lily with pure white fragrant blooms. Native.

PINK
- Pink Sensation
  - Deep rich pink. Probably finest pink hardy water lily. Remains open later in the day than other types. 15 cm blooms, 25 cm leaves.

Water Lilies are easily grown and their flowers are perhaps the most beautiful of all plants. If you can provide a location receiving six hours of full sun per day then you can grow water lilies. There are some lilies that will bloom with less sun and some for small ponds.

Water Lilies have two great attributes: (1) they bloom all season, some times with as many as 9 flowers at a time. The Tropical Lilies will keep blooming into the fall. (2) They provide essential surface coverage, which reduces algae and provides shade for fish.

Most hardy water lilies will grow to 12 sq. feet in one season. Some tropica ls get as big as 20 sq. ft.

OVER-WINTERING OF HARDY WATER LILIES

Lilies can over winter outdoors as long as their tubers (roots) don’t freeze solid. In the Toronto area, 40 cm of water over the soil will usually do. Another method to winter them is to put them in cold storage (e.g. a root cellar or cold storage room) where the temperature remains approximately 5°C. Keep the plants moist.

One can even place them in a hole in the ground with at least 40 cm of soil above the pot. [Don’t forget to mark their location] The plants should be moved to their wintering location once leaves go dormant. Once the ice melts in spring, move the plants back into the pond and keep them close to the surface where it is warmer. Once they begin to establish, lower them to their growing location and fertilize well to insure robust growth and a strong rootstock for winter.
TROPICAL WATER LILIES

A magnificent addition to any pond! Most are extremely fragrant and they come in every colour in the rainbow. There are also night blooming lilies, which make your evening experience in your garden a true joy. Tropical Water Lilies should not be planted out until June when the danger of frost is past. Water temperature must be at least 20°C (70°F). Cold water will shock them into dormancy. Tropical water lilies need very warm, quiet waters to thrive.

DAY BLOOMING TROPICAL

**PINK**
Evelyn Randig
18 cm raspberry blooms, 35 cm striking mottled leaves.

**PURPLE**
Pacific
Lush violet, fragrant blooms, heavily mottled leaves.

Director Moore
Richest violet imaginable, blooms freely 18 – 25 cm.

**BLUE**
Blue Beauty
Rich blue fragrant 20 cm blooms floriferous, 35 cm leaves.

August Koch
Rich blue fragrant 25 cm blooms, leaves 30 cm +.

**AUTUMN**
Afterglow
Fragrant peachy yellow 15 cm blooms pinkish Underside of leaves.

NIGHT BLOOMING TROPICAL WATER LILIES

Night Blooming Tropical Water Lilies start to open as the Day Blooming varieties are beginning to close. They remain open all night and close in the morning. They will also flower on dull days when the day bloomers may refuse to open.

**WHITE**
Woods White Knight
Large white 25 – 30 cm double blooms.
Green 30 – 35 cm leaves.

**RED**
Red Cup
Deep, vivid red free flowering.
Mahogany coloured leaves. 30 – 45 cm

**PINK**
Mrs. George C. Hitchcock
25 cm fragrant pink flowers. Excellent bloomer 30 cm bronze tinted leaves.

OVER WINTERING OF TROPICAL WATER LILIES

METHODS TO KEEP LILY TUBERS THROUGH WINTER:
- **In an aquarium:** Just before a killing frost, remove lilies from your pond, cut back the leaves and carefully dig out tubers. Tubers may have divided and be as small as marbles. These can be potted in 4” pots with aquatic soil and put in a heated aquarium with a strong light source and water at 70°F – 80°F.
- They can also be kept growing in a cool sunny location (eg. solarium), or you may use a grow light to assist them in darker locations. Remove 50% of the mature leaves before placing them inside for the winter.
- **Storing method:** Place tuber in damp (not wet) sand, to prevent rotting in an area that remains 50 - 55°F. Pot up in early spring and put in water in a sunny window, with an aquarium heater to maintain warmth.

Some people treat tropical lilies as annuals and let them die over winter. In spring, new plants are purchased and planted.

Fertilizing should begin once 4 – 5 leaves have appeared for Tropicals.
LOTUS (Nelumbo)

Most people associate lotus with the eastern continents like India and the Orient. However, the American Lotus (Nelumbo lutea) is native from Southern Ontario to Florida.

GROWING CONDITIONS

Lotus love heat and require temperatures above 70°F for many weeks to begin vigorous growth. They prefer full sun, but if the water is warm enough they will bloom in part shade. The blooms open in the morning and close around 4 PM for most varieties. Most blooms will last for approximately 3 days. Once they begin to flourish, Lotus are heavy feeders and can be fertilized once or even twice a month. Mature Lotus plants bloom more profusely and may require more fertilizer.

Lotus can be grown in large watertight containers, so they can be placed in various locations around your yard or home, such as on a deck. Large varieties prefer a pot or space of 60 cm in diameter or larger. Small varieties do fine in 40 cm containers. Lotus can also be naturalized into earth bottom ponds or grown in deep tubs sunk into the ground 3/4 full of soil.

NOTE: If a container is used, it must be watertight and kept FULL of water at all times. If the container is at least 90 cm deep, it can be buried in the garden with the lotus and left there all year. Lotus is considered a hardy perennial in the GTA. They can even be over-wintered safely outdoors.

POPULAR VARIETIES

The Sacred Pink Lotus

The sacred flower of the Egyptians always commands interest and admiration. The mystical spell of the ancient Nile still hovers around this exotic plant. It produces 25 – 30 cm fragrant pink blooms borne on long stems quite high above the water as well as extremely large leaves often 50 – 90 cm in diameter and also standing well above the water.

Mrs. Perry D. Slocum  Most popular of all. Easy bloomer with fragrant flowers 20 – 30 cm and leaves 45 – 60 cm and height 120 – 150 cm changing flower colour of pinks, yellow, creams.

Momo Botan  15 cm rosy – pink double blooms that last longer than other lotus, up to 6 days. These may even stay open into the night. Leaves 25 – 40 cm width and 60 – 120 cm height, a small variety that’s dependable.

Chawan Basu  Ivory blooms with brilliant pink margins, blooms 13-23cm and leaves 35-43cm , height 60-90cm

Rosea Plena  Rich double rose 25 – 30 cm and blooms. Leaves 45 cm width and 150 cm height.

PLANTING TUBERS

Lotus are sold already potted or as tubers in early spring. Tubers are very fragile and will not grow if the tip is broken. Use the Diagram below to assist in planting. Once planted, cover with 10 cm of water.

LOTUS TUBER

![Lotus Tuber Diagram](image)

Plant tuber flat and cover with 2 inches of soil. Be careful of growing tips and do not break the tuber in pieces.

NOTE: The growing tips must stick out of the soil. Use a round container as the tuber may die if it strikes a sharp corner during its growth.

Another method to plant tubers is to let them float in their pot (covered in water) until leaves begin to sprout. Then place a light stone on the tuber and let it pull itself into the soil with its roots. Transplanting potted lotus into larger pots or natural ponds can be done by cutting the bottom off the pot (be careful not to cut the tuber). Have someone support the pot bottom, then slide the pot up off the plants. This can be done in spring to early summer.

WINTERING LOTUS

Lotus can be over-wintered in our ponds similar to hardy lilies. In zone 6 or warmer, the water should be at least 16” (40 cm) over the pot. Only once the leaves brown off, cut back to 10 cm and place the lotus at the bottom of the pond. If green stems are cut at this time (or below the water level) and water is allowed to enter the hollow stem, this could damage or even kill the plant. It is better to leave a stem uncut if you are not certain. If the pond is not deep enough or if you have a dwarf variety, put the lotus in dark, cold storage where the temperature remains approximately 40°F. Bring the lotus out in the spring and place in a warm location. Transplanting is best done in early spring before new leaf growth.
HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS

We hope you will feel free to consult us should any problems or questions arise that are not dealt with here. Below are some of the questions we are asked most often about lilies.

1. **How large of a pot should each lily have?**
   Large varieties should have pots 10” or larger, small varieties 8” or larger. Be sure the tuber or roots are covered with soil but **NO SOIL ON THE CROWN** of the plant.

2. **What kind of soil is best?**
   A good aquatic soil is preferred containing a mixture of **clay, sand** and **topsoil**. Also, use water plant **fertilizer** tablets.

3. **How deep should the water be for lilies?**
   There should be at least 6 inches of water over the crown of the plant and some can handle up to 48”. Refer to Water Plant Price List. Remember, lilies like warm still waters.

4. **Can a tub or bathtub be used?**
   Yes, the smaller varieties will do well in such pools.

5. **Can I grow lilies in a natural pond or lake?**
   Yes, several of the hardy varieties listed will **adapt** readily and naturalize themselves. Please refer to Water Plant Price List.

6. **What makes the water green?**
   An unbalanced pond. After the pond is established with a **proper balance** of plants, fish and snails for a few weeks, the water should clear.

7. **How do I keep mosquitoes out of the pond?**
   Have some small fish in the pond to eat the **mosquito larvae**. Be sure to keep your pump running.

8. **What insect pests attack water lilies?**
   Aphids are the most common. We suggest control by spraying daily with the hose so your **fish can feed on the bugs**, this method is preferable to the use of any insecticide.

9. **Check these points if Lily is not doing well:**
   1. Use of chemical in pond e.g. algaecides
   2. Planter too small
   3. Not enough sunlight
   4. Did not use soil and water lily fertilizer recommended
   5. Soil over crown of plant
   6. Too much water movement
   7. Root bound
   8. Too much or too little water over the crown.
   9. Hardies go dormant in October
   10. Tropicals do poorly in cold water and go dormant in water temperature below 70°F.

**NOTE:** Chemicals can harm desirable aquatic plants. We recommend balancing the **pond** with the proper plants, fish and snails see Green Thumb Guide GT106 “Growing Water Plants”.

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*Green is not just a colour............
It’s our future.*