



Cooperative Extension Service
Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences

*Nymphaea odorata*¹

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Introduction

Fragrant Waterlily is widely distributed in quiet pools and ponds in North and Central America (Fig. 1). The variety *gigantea* occurs throughout Florida, whereas *godfreyi*, with smaller flowers, is found primarily in West Florida. It is a hardy, native plant that floats its round foliage and produces a fragrant, multipetaled, white flower just above the water. Each leaf lasts about 6 weeks before turning yellow. This is normal and should not be cause for concern. Flower showiness is legendary and each flower lasts several days, but flowers close in late afternoon and at night. Fragrant Waterlily grows in standing water about 18 inches deep and spreads by means of rhizomes. It can be prevented from spreading by planting it in a container without drainage holes and submerging the container into the water garden. This helps prevent the plant from invading the entire water garden. Although Waterlilies require full sun for best flowering, this one will produce some flowers with only 4 hours of direct sun.

General Information

Scientific name: *Nymphaea odorata*

Pronunciation: nim-FEE-uh oh-duh-RAY-tuh

Common name(s): Fragrant Waterlily, White Waterlily

Family: *Nymphaeaceae*

Plant type: aquatic plant

USDA hardiness zones: 3 through 11 (Fig. 2)

Planting month for zone 7: year round

Planting month for zone 8: year round

Planting month for zone 9: year round

Planting month for zone 10 and 11: year round

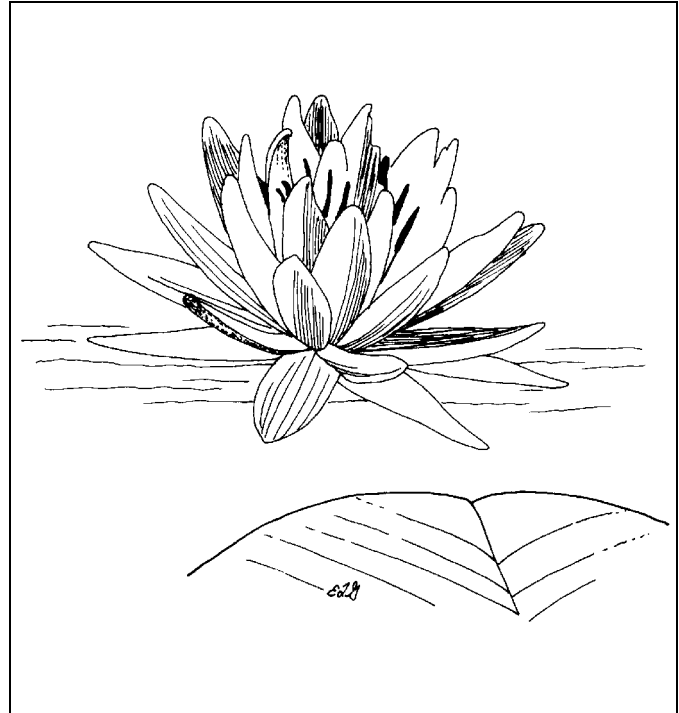


Figure 1. Fragrant Waterlily.

Origin: native to Florida

Uses: cut flowers; attracts butterflies

Availability: somewhat available, may have to go out of the region to find the plant

Description

Height: .5 to 1 feet

Spread: 2 to 4 feet

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Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Plant habit: not applicable

Plant density: open

Growth rate: fast

Texture: medium

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: most emerge from the soil, usually without a stem

Leaf type: simple

Leaf margin: entire

Leaf shape: orbiculate

Leaf venation: palmate

Leaf type and persistence: evergreen

Leaf blade length: 8 to 12 inches

Leaf color: purple or red; variegated

Fall color: no fall color change

Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower

Flower color: white

Flower characteristic: pleasant fragrance; summer flowering; fall flowering; spring flowering

Fruit

Fruit shape: unknown

Fruit length: unknown

Fruit cover: unknown

Fruit color: unknown

Fruit characteristic: suited for human consumption

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: not applicable

Current year stem/twig color: not applicable

Current year stem/twig thickness: not applicable

Culture

Light requirement: plant grows in part shade/part sun

Soil tolerances: grows submerged in water

Drought tolerance:

Soil salt tolerances: poor

Plant spacing: 36 to 60 inches

Other

Roots: not applicable

Winter interest: no special winter interest

Outstanding plant: plant has outstanding ornamental features and could be planted more

Invasive potential: not known to be invasive

Pest resistance: long-term health usually not affected by pests

Use and Management

Hardy Waterlilies should be planted in a container filled with garden soil or potting mix. A shallow and wide container shape is better than a tall, narrow container. The garden soil can be mixed with one-fifth well decomposed cow manure. Incorporate fertilizer at an equivalent rate of about one-quarter cup 10-10-10 per gallon of soil or media to help stimulate growth. Before filling the container, place a small plastic bag filled with sand at the bottom of the container to keep the container from floating in the pond. Plant the rhizome at the edge of the container so it can grow horizontally across the top. Place a 1- or 2-inch layer of sand or gravel over the top of the media after the rhizome is planted in the pot to keep media and soil in the container. Lower the container into 6 inches of water until growth begins. Then it can be set so the bottom is no more than 18 inches below the surface. If the water is too deep, place a brick or concrete block under the container. Do not construct containers from treated lumber since growth could be severely inhibited.

The only maintenance required is monthly application of a slow release fertilizer. Tablets manufactured by various companies can be placed several inches below the sand or gravel layer at the top of the container. Follow the manufacturers directions to determine appropriate number of tablets.