UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA
Cooperative Extension Service
Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences

Fact Sheet FPS-433
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Nymphaea mexicana[1]

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Introduction

Mexican Waterlily is a hardy, native plant that floats its round foliage and produces a fragrant, multipetaled, white flower just above the water (Fig. 1). It was abundant throughout Florida until the introduction of Water Hyacinth which has crowded out the Waterlilies. Control measures that reduce the Water Hyacinth population should help waterlilies grow back and become more prominent. Each leaf of the Waterlily 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.

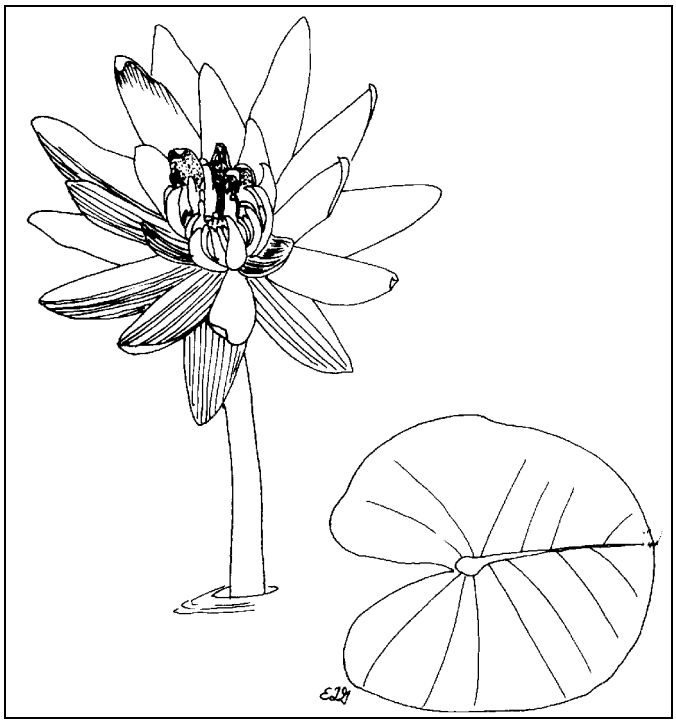

Figure 1. Mexican Waterlily.

General Information

Scientific name: *Nymphaea mexicana*
Pronunciation: nim-FEE-uh meck-sick-KAY-nuh
Common name(s): Mexican Waterlily, Yellow 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
Origin: native to Florida
Uses: cut flowers; attracts butterflies
Availablity: somewhat available, may have to go out of the region to find the plant

Description

1. This document is Fact Sheet FPS-433, one of a series of the Environmental Horticulture Department, Florida Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida. Publication date: October, 1999 Please visit the EDIS Web site at http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu.

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Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Height: .5 to 1 feet
Spread: 2 to 4 feet
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: 4 to 8 inches
Leaf color: green
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: inconspicuous and not showy

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.