

Indiana- Hardy Water Lily Profile

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Small water gardens are in fashion these days. Likely reasons are many, but one of the main explanations is miniaturization is apparent in all facets of landscape gardening. The same holds true in the water garden. This is not to say this is the prevailing trend, just a current twist in a very strong segment of our phenomenal water garden market. Answering the demand for smaller hybrid water lilies growers nationwide look for varieties that will fit the desired profile.

Hybrid cultivar "Indiana" is an example of a small water lily that will perform as well in a tub garden as it will complement plantings in a larger pond. The lily pads three to five inches in diameter are dark green, mottled and speckled, with chestnut pigmentation. Foliage marked like this is interesting even when flowers are not present. The water lily has leaves floating on the surface of the pond for four to six weeks in advance of flowering. The spread of this plant is compact, limited to about two to three feet wide. This small plant prefers to be planted in water that is ten to twenty inches over the soil surface. Like many smaller varieties, they do not perform as well in deep water that larger cultivars tolerate.



The dark orange flowers appear in early May and will put on a show for the entire summer. As the season moves into early fall, the numbers of flowers diminish to an occasional blossom in late September. Unlike most hardy herbaceous perennials, the water lily has an extended bloom season. Flowers may number as many as four to seven open at any given time during the height of its blooming season. The blooms are three to four inches in diameter, opening and closing daily. The flower opens in mid morning and will remain open until late afternoon. It will close tightly; re-opening the next day until it is spent after four days of blooming.

This hardy variety is one of a group of lilies referred to as a changeable color variety. Changeables vary in color as the flower ages. This particular one, developed by Latour Marliac in 1912, has flowers that open light orange, fading to a brilliant copper red for its fourth day of bloom. This changeable is suited to full sun as well as slightly reduced sunlight. It should have at least four hours of direct sunlight to flower, and will do best with sun all day.

In order to flower freely, all water lilies require fertilization. They are generally planted in heavy clay topsoil in at least a gallon of soil. The soil is fertilized with a tablet that is specifically designed for aquatic

plants. The tablet is inserted into the soil by pressing it in with the fingertip, making a hole that is closed back by squeezing the soil closed after insertion.

Keith has been involved in water gardening since 1980 in all aspects, from design, installation, propagation, production and consultation. Springdale is a retail/wholesale mail order production nursery that is open to the public year-round.