

Water lilies

WORDS Petra Süß | PHOTOS Supplied

Water lilies belong to the *Nymphaeaceae* family and are divided into two groups: hardy water lilies and tropical water lilies.

Nelumbo, or Lotus as it is commonly known, is often seen as part of this family too, botanically speaking.

Hardy water lilies are flowering plants which live in fresh water. There are varieties in most colours, from white over yellow, pinks, reds, copper and many others, blooming during the day in late spring or summer.

They produce large leaves and flowers, which float on the surface of the water. In cold climates, they go dormant in autumn.

Tropical water lilies tend to have larger leaves and flowers, which often grow above the water surface.

There are also day- and night-blooming tropical water lilies, in all colours.

One of the most popular is

the tropical blue water lily, the national flower of Sri Lanka and birth flower of the month July.

All water lilies have rhizomes as roots and, in the right conditions, grow and spread well.

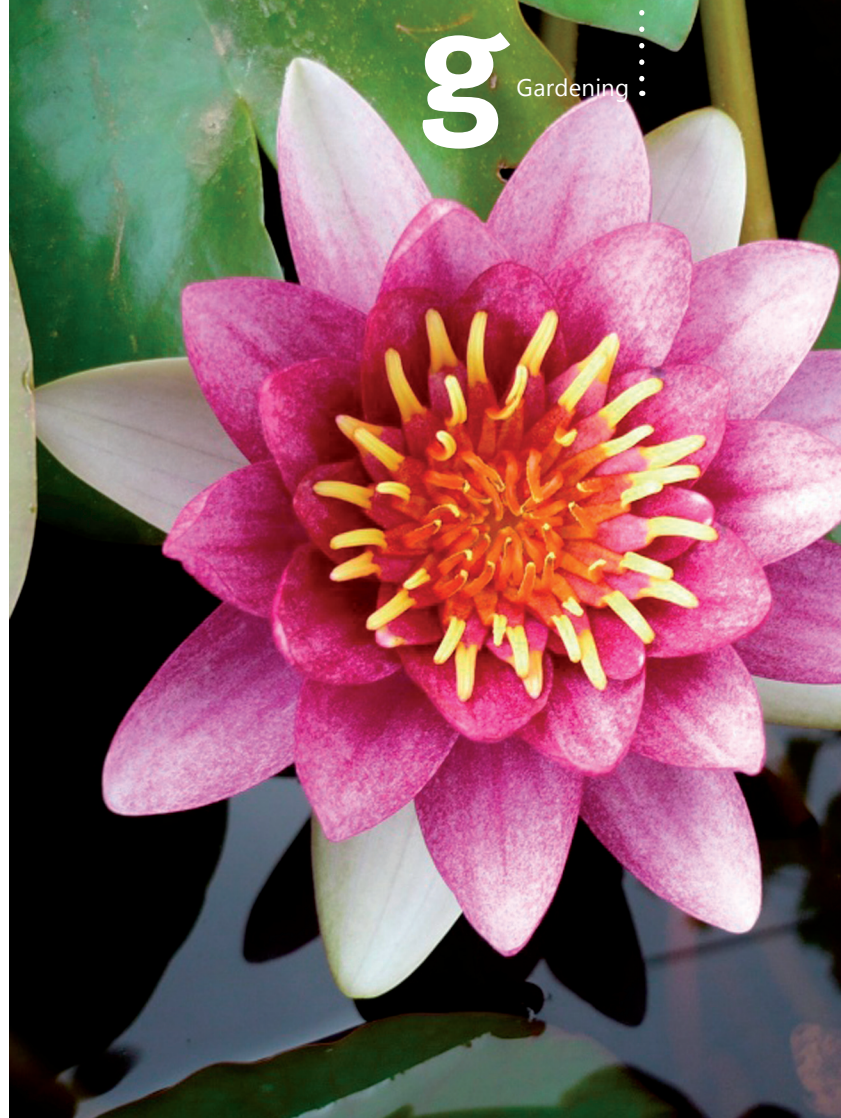
They can be found in nearly every pond because of their beautiful ornamental flowers.

The mostly big lily pads create shade and cover for fish and other animals to hide and they can be planted in greater depth than most other water plants.

There are some dwarf varieties which can easily be grown in a bowl or a small pot, as they only need about 10cm of water. Flowers and leaves stay small too.

Here in Portugal you can find many of the hardy water lilies as well as the tropical ones and, in some places, even the Lotus.

The advantage of the tropical water lily is the long flowering period, often into December,



and beauty of the big outstanding flowers. In very cold spots, you may lose them in winter.

Some varieties of hardy lilies which have become common and do very well in Portugal are Gonnere (white), James Brydon

(red), Rene Gerard (pink), Sulphurea (yellow), Aurora (copper), among others. ●●●●

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