



July/August 2007 Volume 6, Issue 4

M. Bloomers

A Garden Journal

"Take time to dream...it hitches the soul to the stars"...author unknown


Water Lilies...David Albrecht, Horticulturist

With the interest of back-yard ponds on the rise, water lilies have become a very popular item. Horticulturally they are divided into two groups, hardy and tropical. The hardy water lily is the most common and only blooms during the day. The tropicals can bloom either day or night. Also the tropical lilies have blue flowering species as well. The blooms usually last about 2 days. The day blooming varieties will open mid-morning and begin to close in late afternoon. The night blooming varieties usually begin to open at dusk and are closed again by mid-morning the next day. All together there are about 70 different species. These aquatic flowering plants are in the family Nymphaeaceae, with the most recognizable genus *Nymphaea*. The natural habitat for water lilies is along the edge of lakes and ponds where the water is warmer and not over about 2 feet deep. Also, lilies do not like competition for sunlight, so they grow in areas where there are few other plants. Lilies are anchored by their roots that are in the mud or muck at the bottom of the pond, and their leaves, attached by long petioles, float on top the water. For the same species, the petioles will be much longer in deep water than they will be in shallow water. Petiole length is adjusted for water depth.

Water lilies bloom from late spring to early Fall depending on the weather. Fertilization

should begin around mid-March and continue until about mid-September. To fertilize, pond tabs are recommended. Just push the tablet into the soil to a depth of about 1 inch. Three of these tablets per plant is enough to sustain a healthy plant with many blooms. Without fertilization, the plant usually stays rather small and has few, if any, blooms. Water lilies also need at a minimum 6 hours of sunlight per day to bloom. During the cooler months, mid-September through mid-March, the lily will go dormant. It will have no leaves or blooms. This is normal. When the water warms up, the plant will begin to grow once more, and fertilization can resume.

Having water lilies in your pond is great way to reduce the amount of algae in your pond. This is almost the biggest battle of any pond owner. The water lilies compete with the algae for light, and since the lilies are on top the water, they win out. It is recommended that you have at least 60 percent of you pond's surface area covered by plant material to significantly retard algae growth. While there are other plants that can look nice and help compete with the algae, the water lily is by far the most efficient when properly taken care of.

Birth flower for July. Seeds can remain viable for up to 2000 years. 

"Every exit is an entry somewhere else"...Tom Stoppard



Hydrangeas... Sharon Murry, Staff

Hydrangeas, those big beautiful pink, blue or white blooms, sometimes as large as a bowling ball, can grow on a shrub that can sometimes get 4 to 8 feet tall.

Depending on the variety, they may continue to bloom again and again all summer long. Depending on the species, hydrangeas can be grown as vines, shrubs or as small trees. They can be kept smaller with pruning, but since some varieties have their flower buds form on the growth of the previous season and some others on the current year's shoots, the timing affects how and when to prune.

The pH level of your soil and water also affect what color the blooms will be. An alkaline soil with a pH reading of 6-7 will produce pink blooms. An acidic soil with a pH reading of 5-5.8 will produce blue blooms. If you do not know the pH level of your soil or water, have a soil and water test completed or purchase a do it yourself kit from your local nursery. You may also create your own ideal soil by planting your hydrangeas in containers. Hydrangeas grow best in partial shade. Early morning sun and afternoon shade is ideal.

The name *Hydrangea* comes from the Greek meaning 'storing vessel'. Hydrangeas have a reputation for being "water hungry". Adequate water is critical in the high growth months of spring. The plants will sometimes wilt during the heat of the summer afternoon. This is because their large leaves are giving off water faster than the roots of the plant can replace it. As soon as the sun goes down, they perk back up. A good drenching of the root system once or twice a week is preferred to a daily "sprinkle". A good fertilizer, such as 10-40-10 (higher in phosphorus to encourage flowering) should be sprinkled around the plant at the drip line in the spring, or apply a timed release formula once in the spring.

The varieties and bloom types vary in the *Hydrangea* family. The Mophead hydrangeas, *Hydrangea macrophylla* are the most popular hydrangeas grown in home gardens and landscapes. Most mopheads

grown today have blue or pink blooms. The mophead variety is the plant given and received in the early spring usually as an Easter plant. Mopheads have round or globe shaped flower clusters.

The first *Hydrangea macrophylla* that blooms on both old and new wood is the "Endless Summer" hydrangeas. The Original Endless Summer is a perpetual flowering big-leaf hydrangea that blooms virtually all season long. And because Endless Summer can flower repeatedly on new wood, you can be confident that regardless of whether the plant dies back to the crown or it is trimmed at the wrong time, you'll still get wonderful flowers that grow all season. It is very hardy, even to Zone 4 and proven to be mildew resistant.

The Endless Summer Blushing Bride has pure white blooms with semi-double florets that gradually mature to pink (or blue). The disease and mildew-resistant foliage is an attractive dark green, providing a striking background for the mophead blooms. It produces pink blooms in alkaline soils and blue blooms in acidic soils.

The Panicle hydrangea bloom is long, up to 12-14 inches with a somewhat cone shaped flower cluster, like the Oakleaf hydrangeas.

The Lacecap hydrangeas have flattened clusters of what appear to be tiny, immature buds surrounded at the edges by 4-5 petal flowers. Lacecaps are named after their likeness to Colonial ladies' head coverings.

The 'Lady in Red' Hydrangea has flowers with delicate lacecaps, that open pinkish white and turn a lush burgundy-rose as they mature. The clusters develop light blue coloration in acid soils. As fall's cool weather arrives, the leaves develop a rich reddish-maroon color. Throughout the growing season, the red veins, petioles and stems carry the color theme.

The Lady in Red is hardy in zones 6-9. Pruning is not necessary as the bush is a compact form. If you want to prune, it should be completed only in the summer before July – August to be sure that you are not cutting off the stems that hold the flower buds for the next season. This hydrangea blooms on OLD wood.

How do you change the color of the blooms? After determining the soils pH level, lower the


"Courage is the ladder on which all other virtues mount"... Clare Booth Luce



Hydrangeas...Continued

pH (ideally 5.0 – 5.8) by adding soil sulfur, peat or pine needles to make it more acidic to get a blue bloom. For a pink bloom, you need a higher pH (ideally 6.0 – 6.2) and

should add limestone or superphosphate.

When the hydrangea blooms begin to fade, why not clip them and hang them upside down to air dry. They then can be used for 'Endless Pleasure' throughout your home. 

Summertime Harvest...M'Randa Miller, Staff

To pick or not to pick, that is the question. This is one question gardeners have on their mind. Although some guidance is generally provided on the seed packet, there is hardly enough information to answer the more pressing questions. If you are anything like me, that seed packet is long-gone.

Each vegetable carries its own set of rules for harvesting:

Squash—Whether growing yellow squash or zucchini, harvest when they are less than 3 inches in diameter. As they mature, they become tough and seedy.

Tomatoes—Not all tomatoes are bright red when ripe. Look for even color, a glossy skin and a touch between soft and firm.


Peppers—Harvest at any time depending on your taste preference. Peppers have full nutrients and flavor, whether hot or sweet, at full maturity.

Green beans—Harvest green beans when they are small and tender. You should not be able to notice lumps from individual seeds in the pod.

Black eyed peas—In contrast to green beans, harvest when the individual seeds begin to swell. The pod should be green.

Cucumbers—Cucumber harvest depends on your culinary goals. For pickling eating, harvest while the cucumber is less than 4 inches in length. For a full size cooking cucumber, harvest when the skin is uniformly green and firm.

Melons—It has been my experience, that as hard as you may knock, thump or slap, no one answers from inside the melon to tell you if it is ripe. Look at the fruit to determine ripeness. A watermelon is ripe when there is little color contrast between the stripes and when the area on the rind where it was resting is a cream/yellow color, not white. A ripe cantaloupe is heavy for its size, has uniform skin and definite netting. Cantaloupe is also very fragrant and slightly soft near the blossom end of the melon. The blossom end of the cantaloupe is opposite the location where the melon was attached to the plant by the stem.

These are just a few, yet common plants that may be found in your garden this year. While each is unique, there are a few common threads that run between all of them. Harvest early and the plant will bloom and provide fruit again. Do not allow the fruit to over mature and ask yourself common sense questions (Does it smell appealing? Does it look aesthetically pleasing?) 

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A Garden Journal via email, please send us your email address to:

newsletter@MarthasBloomers.com.

Our email list is kept confidential.

"Accept the challenge so that you may feel the exhilaration of victory"...George S. Patton



Plants From All Over—A Personal Opinion...Gay Houston, Staff

As I write this article for Martha's Bloomers newsletter, I am sitting on a plane in Albuquerque that is delayed going to Houston—storms and rain there! Lucky to have traveled a bit during June, many gardens and garden centers have been visited. From the beautifully lush Butchart Gardens in Victoria, BC to some very dry Southwest settings in Santa Fe, New Mexico, one thing is certain: we members of the human race love to participate in this larger garden—our world.

In Seattle I, of course, saw many of the perennials that we grow here. The disconcerting fact is that they often were so much larger and brighter than ours that I didn't recognize them! We Texans certainly can't claim braggin' rights to biggest and best in the rose world. The stunning hybrid roses seem to have dropped out of a rose catalog to land in Seattle. I do have to add that the fragrance and soft blooms of our Antique Roses are nothing to be ashamed of.

In the Pacific Northwest the soft rain, cool nights and mild temperatures seem to make gardening an ongoing joy. The lawns and gardens around even the most modest of homes are colorful and lovely. I was also able to visit many outstanding Garden Cen-

ter/Nursery shops in the area. They are inspiring so look for some fresh ideas for Martha's Bloomers.

The opposite of green Seattle has been some time spent in New Mexico. Hot, dry days, cool nights with an occasional cooling shower allow a different type of garden. The adobe style homes are not all gardens of agaves, cacti, and sage. The many enclosed patios make such good use of bright flowers in lovely containers.

We hope to encourage you in the future to add to your own porches, patios, and even front steps. Containers for us are such a wonderful way to control heavy wet clay that it is tempting to just fill our flowerbeds with large pots. In Santa Fe vines against and trailing over bare walls, a mix of heat loving plants and shrubs, and cool splashing fountain gave me some great ideas.

Stop by Martha's and let's discuss some fresh ideas for your yard.

Texas gardens and Texas folks
are still the best!



What's Cooking at the Café...Melissa Rodriguez

Attention All Brides-To-Be: Celebrate your special day in our beautiful garden setting. Cafe M. Bloomers Tea Room is the perfect place to host your bridal shower or luncheon. The Arbor Room is also available for tea parties, private parties and meetings. Let Cafe M. Bloomers help make your special event memorable.

Company is coming and there never seems to be enough time to get everything done... let Cafe M. Bloomers make life easier! We offer baked goods, boxed lunches and party platters to go. Call Cafe M. Bloomers for a complete list of our fresh, homemade baked goods.

Need something new for your kitchen? Be

sure to stop in to see the hot new items in our Gourmet Shop. We offer beautiful tea sets, fun kitchen tools, flavorful fruit teas, and our very own homemade orange spiced tea, and much more!

For luncheon and other special event reservations, call

Café M. Bloomers

(936) 870-3277

Seating is limited.

Reservations confirmed by credit card.



"I myself have 12 hats, and each one represents a different personality.

Why be just yourself?..."Margaret Atwood



Calendar of Events...

Saturday Seminars - and they are Free!

“**The Pondless Waterfall**” Construction Seminar—Saturday, August 11 at 11 am. Presented by Johnny Visor, Landscape Designer.

“**Orchids—Interbreeding of Species—Intergenerics**” - Saturday, August 25 at 11 am. Presented by Dr. Rainer Fink, Orchid Specialist.

“**Fall Decorating**” - Saturday, September 22 at 11 am. Presented by Tricia Barksdale, floral designer, Petals 'n Bloomers.

“**Lesson's from a Rose Rustler**” - Saturday, September 29 at 11 am. Presented by Mike Shoup, Antique Rose Emporium.

“**A Year of Naturalizing Bulbs**” - Saturday, October 13 at 11 am. Presented by Margaret Cherry, TMCNP #496.

“**Fresh Ideas for Tired Gardens**” - Saturday, October 20 at 11 am. Presented by Dr. William (Bill) Welch, Professor and Extension Horticulturist, Texas A&M University.

“**12 Doors of Christmas**” - Saturday, November 10 at 11 am. Presented by Tricia Barksdale, floral designer, Petals 'n Bloomers.

“**Orchids for Christmas**” - Saturday, December 1 at 11 am. Presented by Dr. Rainer Fink, Orchid Specialist.

Luncheons, Teas, and other Special Events

Watch for our Fall Schedule Coming Soon!

For luncheon & tea reservations confirmed by credit card,

call Café M. Bloomers at (936) 870-3277.

For more information on our seminars, visit us at www.MarthasBloomers.com.

To Register for Free Saturday Seminars: Call (936) 870-4044 or
email: registration@MarthasBloomers.com.

We welcome your suggestions for future seminars.

Please email to: suggestions@MarthasBloomers.com

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Store Hours Mon-Sat 9am - 6pm Sun 11am - 5pm Martha's Bloomers (936) 825-7400

Café M. Bloomers, a Tea Room (936) 870-3277

Cafe Open Tues-Sun (Closed Monday) Serving Lunch 11am - 3pm Desserts until 4pm

