

# American white waterlily

(*Nymphaea odorata*)

For definitions of botanical terms, visit [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Glossary\\_of\\_botanical\\_terms](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Glossary_of_botanical_terms).

American white waterlily (also known as fragrant waterlily) is a floating aquatic plant that produces a large, solitary, fragrant flower with numerous white, lanceolate petals and yellow centers. Leaves are large and orbicular with a clefted base. They are dark green and shiny. Fruits are leathery, globose capsules with numerous small gray to orange seeds. The plant is rooted in the submerged soil.

American white waterlily flowers spring through fall. It is tolerant of varied climates, but is typically dormant during cool weather. It occurs naturally in swamps, marshes, slow-moving streams and shallow lakes, ponds and ditches.

The seeds, flowers and leaves of the American white waterlily are edible to humans. Leaves and unopened flowers can be boiled, while the seeds can be ground into flour. The flowers are also attractive to butterflies, but they are pollinated primarily by beetles.<sup>†</sup>

**Family:** Nymphaeaceae (Waterlily family)

**Native range:** Nearly throughout Florida

To see where natural populations of American white waterlily have been vouchered, visit [www.florida.plantatlas.usf.edu](http://www.florida.plantatlas.usf.edu).

**Hardiness:** Zones 7–10

**Soil:** Roots require fully saturated soils

**Exposure:** Full sun

**Growth habit:** Leaves up to 18" wide and flat on the water's surface; flowers 2–6" wide

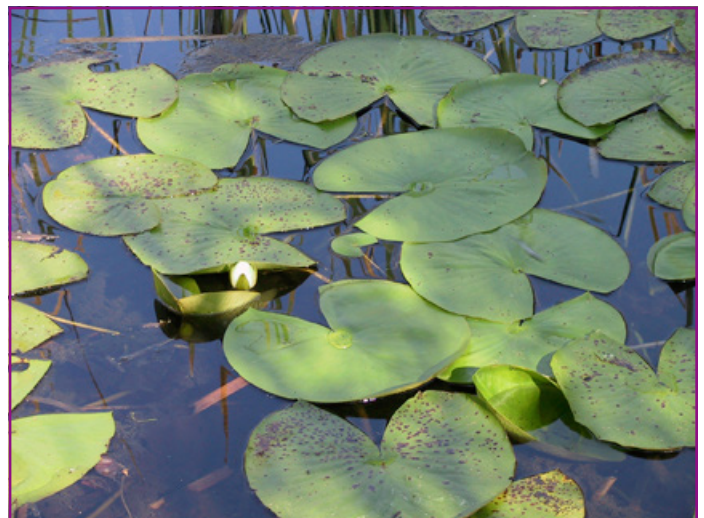
**Propagation:** Seed

**Garden tips:** American white waterlily can be propagated by seed and from pieces of underwater stems. It can be a beautiful addition to a water garden or small pond, but its growth can be difficult to limit.

<sup>†</sup> See [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pollination\\_syndrome#Beetle\\_pollination\\_.28cantharophily.29](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pollination_syndrome#Beetle_pollination_.28cantharophily.29) for more information on beetle pollination syndrome.



Photo by Stacey Matrazzo



Flower bud among many leaves. Photo by Stacey Matrazzo