

Agapanthus orientalis Agapanthus, African Lily, Lily of the Nile¹

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Introduction

Clusters of large, blue, funnel-shaped flowers appear atop long stalks in summer and early fall, rising above the coarse, strap-like, green leaves. Flowers make a wonderful display in mass plantings. They can also be used as accents in a small garden or by the patio.



Figure 1. Full form—*Agapanthus orientalis*: agapanthus, African lily, lily of the Nile.

Credits: Edward F. Gilman, UF/IFAS



Figure 2. Flower—*Agapanthus orientalis*: agapanthus, African lily, lily of the Nile.

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General Information

Scientific name: *Agapanthus orientalis*

Pronunciation: ag-uh-PANTH-us or-ee-en-TAY-liss

Common name(s): Agapanthus, African lily, lily of the Nile

Family: *Amaryllidaceae*

Plant type: perennial; herbaceous

USDA hardiness zones: 9 through 11 (Figure 3)

Planting month for zone 9: year-round

Planting month for zone 10 and 11: year-round

Origin: not native to North America

Invasive potential: not known to be invasive

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Uses: mass planting; container or above-ground planter; groundcover; accent; edging; attracts hummingbirds; suitable for growing indoors

Availability: somewhat available, may have to go out of the region to find the plant



Figure 3. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Description

Height: 2 to 4 feet

Spread: 1 to 2 feet

Plant habit: upright

Plant density: moderate

Growth rate: moderate

Texture: medium

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate

Leaf type: simple

Leaf margin: entire

Leaf shape: linear

Leaf venation: parallel

Leaf type and persistence: evergreen

Leaf blade length: 8 to 12 inches

Leaf color: green

Fall color: no fall color change

Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower

Flower color: blue; lavender; purple

Flower characteristic: summer-flowering

Fruit

Fruit shape: no fruit

Fruit length: no fruit

Fruit cover: no fruit

Fruit color: no fruit

Fruit characteristic: no fruit

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: occasionally wet; slightly alkaline; clay; sand; acidic; loam

Drought tolerance:

Soil salt tolerance: unknown

Plant spacing: 18 to 24 inches

Other

Roots: not applicable

Winter interest: no special winter interest

Outstanding plant: plant has outstanding ornamental features and could be planted more

Pest resistance: no serious pests are normally seen on the plant

Use and Management

Growing in full sun or partial shade, *Agapanthus* is usually left undisturbed for several years and will form a large clump, making an attractive groundcover or accent plant. *Agapanthus* prefers moist, organic soil conditions but can endure drought once established. Plant about 18 to 24 inches apart for a thick groundcover effect.

Available cultivars include: 'Albus,' white flowers; 'Flore Pleno,' double flowers; 'Variegatus,' with striped leaves; and 'Nanus,' a dwarf, compact form.

Propagation is by division or seed.

Disease-resistant selections are available for humid climates.

Problems include chewing insects, maggots, and borers.

Design Considerations

The strap-like leaves and large blue flowers of the agapanthus make it perfect for highly visible spaces in the landscape. Use with plants that are softer with small foliage and mounding or spreading forms. Dark green and/or burgundy foliage in the companion plants will highlight the clusters of blue flowers and soft green of the leaves. New agapanthus cultivars also have white, dark blue, and violet-blue flowers. When pairing with other flowering plants use white, and warm colors such as pinks and corals and soft

yellow and light orange with the blue-flowered agapanthus. The white-flowered variety can be used with any other color to brighten the space.

Pests and Diseases

Botrytis can devastate a planting, especially in humid climates in the eastern US. Try the disease-resistant selections in the East.