



Agapanthus

Agapanthus /ˌæɡəˈpænθəs/ is the only genus in the subfamily *Agapanthoideae* of the flowering plant family Amaryllidaceae. The family is in the monocot order Asparagales. The name is derived from scientific Greek: ἀγάπη (agape) = love, άνθος (anthos) = flower.

Some species of *Agapanthus* are commonly known as lily of the Nile (or African lily in the UK), although they are not lilies and all of the species are native to Southern Africa (South Africa, Lesotho, Swaziland, Mozambique) though some have become naturalized in scattered places around the world (Australia, Great Britain, Mexico, Ethiopia, Jamaica, etc.).

Species boundaries are not clear in the genus, and in spite of having been intensively studied, the number of species recognized by different authorities varies from 6 to 10. The type species for the genus is *Agapanthus africanus*. A great many hybrids, and cultivars, have been produced. They are cultivated throughout warm areas of the world. They can especially be spotted throughout Northern California. Most of these were described in a book published in 2004.

Description

Agapanthus is a genus of herbaceous perennials that mostly bloom in summer. The leaves are basal, curved, and linear, growing up to 60 cm (24 in) long. They are rather leathery and arranged in two opposite rows. The plant has a mostly underground stem called a rhizome (like a ginger 'root') that is used as a storage organ. The roots, which grow out of the rhizome, are white, thick and fleshy.

The inflorescence is a pseudo-umbel subtended by two large bracts at the apex of a long, erect scape, up to 2 m (6.6 ft) tall. They have funnel-shaped or tubular flowers, in hues of blue to purple, shading to white. Some hybrids and cultivars have colors not found in wild plants.

Taxonomy

The genus *Agapanthus* was established by L'Heritier in 1788

Species

Zonneveld & Duncan (2003) divided *Agapanthus* into six species (*A. africanus*, *A. campanulatus*, *A. caulescens*, *A. coddii*, *A. inapertus*, *A. praecox*). Four additional species had earlier been recognised by Leighton (1965) (*A. comptonii*, *A. dyeri*, *A. nutans* and *A. walshii*), but were given subspecific rank by Zonneveld & Duncan. As of December 2013, the World Checklist of Selected Plant Families recognises seven species:

1. *Agapanthus africanus* (L.) Hoffmanns (syn. *A. umbellatus*; African Lily or African Tulip)

formerly included

The name *Agapanthus ensifolius* was coined in 1799,

As a rule *Agapanthus* species are pest-hardy, neither being much attacked nor drastically affected by common garden pests. However, since the early 21st century *Agapanthus* in the far south of South Africa have fallen victim to a species of Noctuid moth, the *Agapanthus* Borer, *Neuranthes spodopterodes*. The larvae of the moth bore into the budding inflorescence and as they mature they tunnel down towards the roots, or emerge from the stem and drop down to feed on the leaves or rhizomes. A severe attack promotes rot and may stunt or even kill the plant; even plants that survive commonly lose most of their inflorescences and fail to produce the desired show of flowers.

Allergenic potential

Agapanthus has low potential for causing allergies; its OPALS allergy scale rating is 2 out of 10.