

Chromatella- Hardy Water Lily Profile

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In 1887 this hybrid made its debut at The Royal Botanical Gardens in Kew, Surrey, UK. At the time of introduction, it was immediately accepted as one of the finest varieties to date. Chromatella has for the last one hundred and thirteen years been regarded as a must have for the water garden. Not only is it an outstanding performer in flower quality and quantity, but it is one of a few cultivars that flower in lower than normal lighting conditions. When one reviews the ways this hybrid is mentioned in literature, many names would be discovered. The currently accepted name Chromatella, has been there since the beginning. Most other names are no longer found in grower catalogs and will not be mentioned here.



The cup-shaped canary yellow flowers measure three to six inches across. Though there is some fragrance to the blooms, it is a subtle, yet pleasing scent. Smaller flowers and plant size can be had by limiting pot size to one gallon, thus dwarfing the rootstock and ultimately the plant size. The flowers are borne in profusion from early May until late September, when they begin to become fewer in number. The intense color is consistently brilliant yellow, not fading with age as some varieties do. Each flower lasts four days, constantly being produced as older ones are dying off. As always with hardy water lilies, ample fertilization is necessary to promote flowering.

The foliage of Chromatella provides interest to the water garden even when it is not in flower. The pads range from four to seven inches across with a total leaf spread of three to five feet wide. Interestingly, the pads are mottled with chestnut brown markings. The fullest leaf growth can be found on water lilies that are planted in water ten to twenty four inches over the soil surface. This variety is extremely hardy, able to tolerate shallower than normal water depths even in winter.

Due to its ability to perform even in less sunlight than is normally required, this hybrid is sold more than any other variety. Any time someone wants a water lily for three or four hours of sunlight, Chromatella is going to be the choice. This variety will not flower as much as in these low light conditions, but it will surely do better than any other cultivar.

Whether for a slightly shady pond, a larger water garden or even a tub garden, Chromatella is a first rate selection for any water garden. Try it out as a complement to any collection of water lilies and aquatic plants.

Keith has been involved in water gardening since 1980 in all aspects, from design, installation, propagation, production and consultation. Springdale is a retail/wholesale mail order production nursery that is open to the public year-round.