

# *"Just Add Water"*

By Soni Forsman -- previous articles under "Just Add Water" bullet above

*Lotus stars named for Slocum women*



*Nelumbo 'Maggie Belle Slocum' opens early in the morning*

*Nelumbo* 'Mrs. Perry D. Slocum' and *Nelumbo* 'Maggie Belle Slocum' are leading ladies in Water Garden Shows staged each summer. Both give great performances, are gorgeous and well-liked by the production crews (water gardeners). The first lotus is dressed in two-tone double flowers that open pink, turn yellowish-pink the second day and become creamy white the next. The other wears lavender-pink single blossoms. Both stand tall, four to five feet, with large pads.

They were hybridized by the late Dr. Perry D. Slocum, renowned creator of waterlilies and lotus. *Nelumbo* 'Mrs. Perry D. Slocum' is a cross between the Northern American native lotus *Nelumbo lutea* and *Nelumbo* 'Rosea Plena' a double rose lotus of unknown parentage. He made the crosses in 1962 and the best one was introduced in 1964. It bears his wife's name. This lotus continues to be one of the most popular lotuses in the United States.



*Nelumbo* 'Maggie Belle Slocum'

Kelly Billing, MWGS September 2020 speaker, says a number of growers are selling *Nelumbo* 'Mrs. Perry D. Slocum' plants that are mixed, not true ones. She says it can be difficult to know what you will receive. The first day bloom of a true plant is pink with broad outer petals and a full set of inner ruffly petals that completely circle the center (seed pod).

Following the death of his first wife, Dr. Slocum sold Slocum Water Gardens in FL to his son, Peter, and moved to a quiet retreat in Franklin NC. It was there that he met his second wife, Maggie Belle, and named a hybrid for her. It is a cross of *Nelumbo nucifera* 'Shirokunshi,' a tulip lotus native to Japan, and *N. 'Pekinensis Rubra*. He introduced this hybrid in 1984 and it received a US patent in 1986, only the second lotus patented in this country. In his book, *Waterlilies and Lotuses, Species, Cultivars and New Hybrids*, Slocum writes of *N. 'Maggie Belle Slocum'* that it is "A hybrid of which I'm very proud." Franklin, NC is the home of Perry's Water Gardens. Maggie Belle passed away in 1999.



*First day flower of *Nelumbo* 'Mrs. Perry D. Slocum' has wide outer petals with fluffy inner ones circling the seed pod.*

In 2001, the hybridizer married Louise and he named a lotus for her, *Nelumbo* 'Louise Slocum.' It is a medium size with single white petals that gradually become a soft yellow near the center. I did a quick scan of a few websites and did not find this lotus available. Dr. Slocum passed away in 2004.

I purchased the first two varieties in the 1990s. My present-day plants are distant relatives of the original ones. I grow them in 16x7 inch containers and divide every other year. A larger container might be better but the size I use is the largest I can safely handle. Planting medium is good topsoil with some clay.



*Nelumbo* 'Mrs Perry D. Slocum' - two-tone second day bloom

When the lotus has a couple of aerial leaves, I begin fertilizing every two weeks with an aquatic fertilizer in tablet form that contains humates. I stop fertilizing in late August so growth slows in preparation for dormancy and winter. Both bloom every year - two to six or more flowers each season - make large tubers and are reliably hardy, wintered outside in the water garden. Thinking of growing a lotus, consider one of these popular Slocum ladies or both.



*Creamy-white third day flower of Nelumbo 'Mrs. Perry D. Slocum' with a first-day bloom*