

"Just Add Water"

Articles and Photos by Soni Forsman

Waterlily Hospitals Open

My field hospitals for hardy waterlilies are open. They were closed last year - no patients. This year I admitted eight different varieties, the most ever.

The hospitals are shallow containers of water sitting in sunny locations. Patients are hardy waterlilies that showed no foliage growth in the spring but the tubers visible at or near the top of the pots were firm to the touch despite looking dead. About three inches of water covers the top of the plants. At this depth the water warms quickly as the tubers bask in the spring sun.

Once the waterlilies are in the hospitals all that is required of me is patience, lots of it. It takes a minimum of two weeks and up to six to see tiny new growth. And, even more time before that growth is large enough to divide out and replant in a clean container with fresh soil.

This year's patients are *Nymphaea* 'Joey Tomocik,' *N.* 'Barbara Dobbins,' *N.* 'Charlene Strawn,' *N.* 'Wanvisa,' *N.* 'Mangala Ubol,' *N.* 'Colorado,' *N.* 'Clyde Ikens,' and one called unknown yellow. The later hitchhiked here with other plants many years ago. As I write this in late May, all of the varieties are showing small growth. I will have flowers by mid-to-late-July.

Over the years, I've observed that the waterlilies I put in the hospitals are yellow, orange or peach colored ones. White, red and pink hardies have never been patients plus a few yellows haven't either.

Why is it only those in shades of yellow? I'm not sure but family must play a role. All yellow, peach and orange hardy waterlilies including those that exhibit just a hint of yellow have the species *N. Mexicana* in their background. It is native to Mexico and now the southern United States. It is considered marginally hardy this far north. I've heard it referred to as a tropical hardy waterlily.

Another observation I've made over the years is that the varieties in treatment this year will not return the following year. With so many admissions in 2018, will the hospital(s) be closed next year?



Nymphaea 'Mangala Ubol' (Last Summer)



Nymphaea 'Mangala Ubol' (In hospital)