

THE LOTUS

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| Pharmaceutical Name | : <i>Nodus Nelumbinis Rhizomatis</i> |
| Family | : <i>Nymphaeaceae</i> –Water lily |
| Genus | : <i>Nelumbo</i> |
| Botanical Name | : <i>Nelumbo Nucifera Gaertn</i> |
| Common Names | : <i>Sacred Lotus, East Indian Lotus, Egyptian Lotus Lotus Root (for the rhizome), Lian or lin ngau (in China & Taiwan), Hasu (Japanese for the whole Plant), Renkon (Japanese for the edible rhizome)</i> |
| Sanskrit Name | : <i>Ambuja, Padma, Kamala and Pankaja.</i> |

Cultivation

Should be planted in sunny positions in medium or clay loam.

Habitat

Grows along lakes and rivers in wet soil.

Characteristics

The lotus is an aquatic plant that grows three to six feet tall. The Flowers are about 12 inches across. Depending on the variety, the color can range from creamy white to pink and deep rose. Both the flowers and leaves grow well above the surface of the water. The flowers last only three days. The Lotus is unique in that it bears fruit and flowers at the same time.

Lotus flower are grown commercially primarily for their edible storage rhizomes. They retain their crisp texture even after cooking. The starch obtained from the rhizomes has properties similar to that of arrowroot. Early leaves & petioles can be used as green vegetables.

The seeds are very long lived- there are reports of germination after 200- 500 years in the soil. The Chinese consider these to have medicinal value.

A unique characteristic of lotus is that the lotus is a “self-refrigerant.” This means that, regardless of the outside temperature, the temperature inside the flower always remains same.

Types Of Lotus

| Colour | Known as | Meant For |
|-----------------------|-----------------|-----------|
| A) White lotus | Saraswati Kamal | Knowledge |
| B) Pink lotus | Laxmi Kamal | Wealth |
| C) Blue lotus | Krishna Kamal | Hard work |
| D) Green-yellow lotus | Brahma Kamal | Creation |

Botanical History

The lotus is an Asian water lily known for the delicate beauty of its water flowers. It possesses an amazing ability to flourish in a variety of environments ranging from clear ponds to muddy marshes. It is also known for its exceptionally hearty seed pods, which often plant themselves far from its source, bringing the beauty of the lotus blossoms everywhere.

Most seeds remain quiescent during a cold or dry season and germinate only with the coming of favorable growing conditions. Seeds that require special treatment to germinate, even when presented with adequate water and oxygen and favorable temperatures, are said to exhibit dormancy. Seeds with thick or waxy coats, which inhibit the entry of water and oxygen, may remain in a prolonged quiescent state. Seeds of the Indian lotus can germinate 200 years after they are shed. Most seeds, however, lose the ability to germinate within several years of shedding. Following the return of the rains, primitive peoples witnessed the rise of the undefiled water lily from the bottom of dried-up watercourses and considered the living blooms symbols of immortality and resurrection. The ancient Egyptians from the 4th dynasty greatly valued the sacred lotus, *N. totus*, in religious ceremonies and funerals.

Lotuses are 5 species of water lilies, three in the genus *Nymphaea* and two in *Nelumbo*; both genera are members of the water-lily family, *Nymphaeaceae*. Lotus is also the name of a genus in the pea family, *Leguminosae*, which contains such plants as the bird's-foot trefoil, *Lotus corniculatus*. *Nymphaea* lotus, the Egyptian white lotus, is believed to be the original sacred lotus of ancient Egypt. It and the Egyptian blue lotus, *N. caerulea*, were often pictured in ancient Egyptian art.

The white lotus is a shallow-water, night-blooming plant with a creeping rootstock (rhizome) that sends up long-stalked, nearly circular, dark green leathery leaves, which float on the surface. The

flowers, up to 25 cm (10 in) across, remain open until midday. The blue lotus is a smaller, less showy day-blooming plant.

The Lotus flower has for thousands of years symbolized spiritual enlightenment. Indeed, this flower essence's purpose is to accelerate spiritual evolvment and enhance healing on every level within the system. The white lotus' rounded petals appear with round, scalloped edge leaves.

The East Indian lotus, *N. nucifera*, found in southern Asia, was introduced into Egypt about 2,500 years ago but is no longer found in the Nile region. Its flowers are considered sacred by the Buddhists of India, Tibet, and China. The lotus, *Nymphaea lotus*, bears many-seeded, berrylike fruit and leathery, floating leaves that may reach 50 cm (20 in) across. The cup-shaped flowers of the lotus were often represented in ancient Egyptian art and architecture.

Lakshmi (luhk'-shmee), wife of the Hindu god Vishnu, and one of the incarnations of the Mother-Goddess, or Devi, is the goddess of fortune and prosperity as well as the epitome of feminine beauty. According to Hindu legend she was born radiant and fully grown from the churning of the sea. Lakshmi is portrayed as sitting on a lotus, her traditional symbol.

Significance

The sacred lotus was one of the world's first flowering plant. It has been found in artifacts in Israel that date back to the 12th and 13th Centuries, predating the appearance of the Israelites. The national flower of India, it is a legendary symbol of purity and spiritual attainment. It has and continues to appear as a central feature in India's poetry and art throughout the centuries and throughout the land.

The lotus has been cherished for centuries, as well, as a Buddhist symbol of life. In Japan it is considered to be the official flower of the month of August as the blooming flowers fill the summer air with fragrance.

Ancient sutras state that the Lotus flower has four virtues- Scent, Purity, Softness and Loveliness.

The Lotus flower contains many euphoric chemicals that are responsible for their powerful effect on those who inhale them. Inhalation of the fragrant lotus has been used since ancient times to help individuals create a bridge between ordinary human existence and divinity. The fragrance has a particularly powerful effect on the emotional body. The euphoria and pleasure experienced as a result of linking up with the divine, creates a habitual desire to seek the spiritual. Additionally, the lotus expands one's consciousness, creating a bridge between the lower analytical and the higher mind.

Unlike the side effects and bad trips that can be caused by the use of mind-expanding drugs to obtain mystical experiences, the lotus is "friendly" to the body. The effects are always positive and never negative. Regardless of one's place on the evolutionary ladder, the lotus always leads higher evolution. In ancient times, the lotus was used extensively for women. It was used in hair-care for women to increase self-confidence. Because the lotus had such power and spiritual effects, it was used by the Egyptians priests in many formulas regardless of their need for the chemical constituents contained in the oil itself. They used it simply to add the healing life force to any formula.

Healing

In Pharmaceutical preparations, the nodes of the rhizomes are used. In addition, extract from the plant in the form of tinctures, concretes, absolutes, essential oils, oleoresins, terpenes, terpene-free fractions, distillates, residues, and more are used commercially in cosmetic products.

Nelumbo Nucifera, the lotus, is used extensively in Ayurveda. It is used in tea formulations to pacify the *Pitta Dosh* and is considered an important ingredient in Ayurvedic face & body oils.

In traditional Chinese medicine, the lotus rhizome is supposed to aid the liver, lung and stomach meridians. It is also said to be useful in controlling or stopping bleeding.

Traditional or Historical Uses

Provides a relaxing, euphoric sensation. May help relieve muscle spasms. For some, it may act as an aphrodisiac. Blue Lotus is a sedative, antispasmodic, and ethnogen.