

FACT SHEET

Giant Amazon Waterlily – *Victoria cruziana*



**Species information**

Scientific name: *Victoria cruziana* A.D.Orb.

Common names: Giant Amazon Lily, Giant Waterlily, Santa Cruz Waterlily, Water-platter

Conservation status: Not yet assessed according to IUCN Red List criteria.

Wild Habitat: Still or slowly moving, shallow waterways.

Key Uses: Ornamental.

Known hazards: Leaves and other plant parts bear sharp spines, which can be hazardous.

**The *Victoria Cruziana* at the Blue Lotus Water Garden.**

Geoff Cochrane has grown the giant waterlily *Victoria cruziana* since the garden opened to the public in 2005. He was given a seedling back in 2003 by a plant collector from far north Queensland, which he successfully propagated. For the past 19 years Geoff has grown this variety of giant waterlily successfully.

The plant is grown at the Blue Lotus Water Garden as an annual each summer, however in the tropics it grows as a short-lived perennial plant. Each autumn seed is collected from this pond and germinated in August. The young seedlings are carefully nurtured and transplanted into a very large tub located under the waterline. The tub contains over half a ton of garden soil and the plant is fertilized on a weekly basis.

The pond is specially heated by a large gas hydronic system, similar to an underfloor heating system in a house. This keeps the water temperature at a level similar to the plant's natural environment. To keep the plant healthy and growing well, we remove the old leaves and feed it regularly. We also monitor the water and air temperature daily and check the plants for signs of stress, disease and pests. The *Victoria cruziana* waterlily lives until daylight length gets to short, around the end of May each year.

**At the gardens the largest leaf (lily pad) we have grown was 175cm in diameter and the biggest recorded in Australia.**



### **More about this species**

*Victoria cruziana* is one of two species of giant waterlily within the genus *Victoria*, the other being *Victoria amazonica*. The *Victoria cruziana* waterlily is native to subtropical South America, where it is found in Bolivia, Argentina, and Paraguay.

The genus *Victoria* was named in honour of the UK's Queen Victoria (1819–1901). The specific epithet *cruziana* was given in honour of Andrés de Santa Cruz (1792–1865), President of Peru and Bolivia, who sponsored an expedition to Bolivia in which the first specimens of this species were collected.

A rooted aquatic herb, the *Victoria cruziana* produces enormous lily pads that lie flat on the water's surface and can grow up to 2 metres in diameter. The very large lily pads (leaves) have a waxy surface, which helps repel water. The leaves are generally green on the topside and sometimes reddish to green on the underside. The topside of the leaves are smooth, but the underside are covered in sharp spines (as sharp as razor blades). This is thought to be a defence against herbivorous fish and manatees. Underside of lily pad bears a network of prominent veins connected to a long petiole (leaf stalk) attached to a rhizome bedded in soil. The leaves can hold heavy weights if the weight is distributed evenly, up to 40 kg.

The plant produces very large flowers from mid-summer up to 40cm in diameter. The lily is a night flowering plant with the flowers only lasting 2-3 days. The flower opens the first night a creamy-white (female), it stays open the following day to attract insects and beetles. It then closes up trapping the insects and beetles inside which pollinate the flower. The following night the flower opens again, but this time it has changed colour to a pinkie mauve (male), then the flower dies and produces a seed pod. In its native habitat, pollination is carried out by a beetle called *Cylocephata castaneal*, which is attracted by the floral scent some say smells like pineapple.

The seeds have been used as a food-source in Central America for hundreds of years. In Paraguay the *V. cruziana* seed was once known as 'water corn' because they were used to make flour.

**On display:** December 26 to mid April

**Where:** Blue Lotus Water Garden, 2628 Warburton Hwy, Yarra Junction

**Venue phone:** 03 5967 2061

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**Image Gallery Link:** <https://spaces.hightail.com/space/HwpMcYY86p>