

Nymphaea 'Chromatella' and N. 'Helvola'



Nymphaea 'Chromatella'

There are hundreds of waterlily varieties in the aquatic plant group - emergent with floating leaves. *Nymphaea 'Chromatella'* and *N. 'Helvola'* date back to the late 19th century, the beginning of modern-day hybridization of hardy waterlilies by the French plantsman Joseph Bory Latour-Marliac. These two early hybrids are half siblings, sharing the same pollen parent *N. flava*, (known as *N. mexicana* today), the North American yellow waterlily

Nymphaea 'Chromatella'

This sunshine yellow waterlily has classic cupped-shaped flowers three to five inches in diameter. The green pads have bronze mottling. The foliage stretches out four- to six-feet over the water's surface making it a medium size waterlily.

I grew it in a half barrel before I had an in-ground pond. It seemed happy enough but it displays better in a 'real' water garden. All waterlilies like full sun, six hours or more, but this one is OK with three to four hours of direct sun, hopefully it basks in that sun over the noon hour.

I plant it in a two-gallon container with good garden top soil. In full sun, I position the container in the water garden so there is about 12-inches of water over the top; in less sun, approximately eight inches. Bricks or overturned flowers pots are examples of what can be used to adjust heights.

Latour-Maliac introduced this hybrid, his first, in 1887, sending it to the Kew Gardens in England. N. 'Chromatella' was his first big hybridization success. The name of this lily is correctly written *Nymphaea 'Marliacea Chromatella'* but most often N. 'Chromatella'



Nymphaea 'Helvola'

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This yellow cultivar has star-shaped flowers the size of silver dollars. They sit atop small heavily mottled pads. Its dwarf size makes it ideal for a tub garden. It likes full sun but also tolerates part shade. This mini opens later in the day than most hardy waterlilies, around noon, and stays open until about 5 p.m.

I generally plant this lily in a six- or eight-inch bulb pan in garden top soil. I like six- to 10-inches of water over the top of the plant, the lesser amount if in part shade. Once it starts to bloom in late spring this waterlily flowers non-stop until fall with more than one flower open at a time.



Nymphaea 'Helvola' shares a water bowl with Dwarf water bamboo (*Dulichium arundinaceum*).

These hybrids were two of eight that Latour-Marliac entered in the World Exposition in Paris in 1889. The collection captured first place in its category. Both are recipients of the Royal Horticultural Society's Award of Garden Merit.

N. 'Chromatella' and N. 'Helvola' are oldies but goodies. Both are great choices for beginner water gardeners and those experienced. They are good bloomers, reliably hardy, will tolerate less than six hours of sun and have lovely pads to compensate for fewer flowers when grown in part shade. I consider these two antique hardies must haves, one for my in-ground water garden and the other for a container. They are winners!!