**Agapanthus orientalis** Agapanthus, African Lily, Lily of the Nile

Edward F. Gilman²

**Introduction**

Clusters of large, blue, funnel-shaped flowers appear atop long stalks in summer and early fall, rising above the coarse, strap-like, green leaves (Figure 1). Flowers make a wonderful display in mass plantings. They can also be used as accents in a small garden or by the patio.

**General Information**

Scientific name: *Agapanthus orientalis*

Pronunciation: ag-uh-PANTH-us or ee-en-TAY-liss

Common name(s): Agapanthus, African lily, lily of the Nile

Family: *Amaryllidaceae*

Plant type: perennial; herbaceous

USDA hardiness zones: 9 through 11 (Figure 2)

Planting month for zone 9: year round

Planting month for zone 10 and 11: year round

Origin: not native to North America

Uses: mass planting; container or above-ground planter; ground cover; accent; edging; attracts hummingbirds; suitable for growing indoors

Availability: somewhat available, may have to go out of the region to find the plant

**Description**

Height: 2 to 4 feet

Spread: 1 to 2 feet

Plant habit: upright

Plant density: moderate

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**Foliage**
- **Leaf arrangement:** alternate
- **Leaf type:** simple
- **Leaf margin:** entire
- **Leaf shape:** linear
- **Leaf venation:** parallel
- **Leaf type and persistence:** evergreen
- **Leaf blade length:** 8 to 12 inches
- **Leaf color:** green
- **Fall color:** no fall color change
- **Fall characteristic:** not showy

**Flower**
- **Flower color:** blue; lavender; purple
- **Flower characteristic:** summer flowering

**Fruit**
- **Fruit shape:** no fruit
- **Fruit length:** no fruit
- **Fruit cover:** no fruit
- **Fruit color:** no fruit
- **Fruit characteristic:** no fruit

**Trunk and Branches**
- **Trunk/bark/branches:** not applicable
- **Current year stem/twig color:** not applicable
- **Current year stem/twig thickness:** not applicable

**Culture**
- **Light requirement:** plant grows in part shade/part sun
- **Soil tolerances:** occasionally wet; slightly alkaline; clay; sand; acidic; loam
- **Drought tolerance:**
- **Soil salt tolerance:** unknown
- **Plant spacing:** 18 to 24 inches

**Use and Management**
Growing in full sun or partial shade, Agapanthus is usually left undisturbed for several years and will form a large clump, making an attractive groundcover or accent plant. Agapanthus prefers moist, organic soil conditions but can endure drought once established. Plant about 18 to 24 inches apart for a thick ground cover effect.

Available cultivars include: 'Albus,' white flowers; 'Flore Pleno,' double flowers; 'Variegatus,' with striped leaves; and ‘Nanus,’ a dwarf, compact form.

Propagation is by division or seed.

Disease resistant selections are available for humid climates.

Problems include chewing insects, maggots, and borers.

**Pests and Diseases**
Botrytis can devastate a planting, especially in humid climates in the eastern U.S. Try the disease resistant selections in the East.

**Other**
- **Roots:** not applicable
- **Winter interest:** no special winter interest
- **Outstanding plant:** plant has outstanding ornamental features and could be planted more
- **Invasive potential:** not known to be invasive
- **Pest resistance:** no serious pests are normally seen on the plant