

AGAPANTHUS: DID YOU KNOW?

Last spring was the first year that I have planted the deciduous Agapanthus Blue Triumphator that Botanus has sold for a few years. I have actually seen them throughout the city of Vancouver for years and finally said to myself “I have to get me some of them”. Since the planting I have learned a lot about them and I would like to share with you what I’ve learned.

First of all I have learned that in order to have some of the things I love, I must first learn to have the patience for them! Gardening has never been a quick fix for me. I do think that all great gardens and gardeners are in for the long haul, but that being said I needed to remind myself yet again that Mother Nature is not to be rushed and that one rule does not apply to all when it comes to rhizomes and tubers and other live plant products. They all have a way of doing everything they should, but just, in their own sweet time.

Agapanthus really do take a long time to get established, in the garden or a pot, it can take up to three years to see flowers from that initial planting and even then it is no guarantee. They love to be pot bound, so plant them in smallish pots and do not transplant or split them for about 4 years, until they really are begging to be let out of that pot. When you go to divide clumps of deciduous Agapanthus do it in March just before they start growing

During the spring and through to mid summer they really love to be fertilized with a balanced fertilizer, like a 14/14/14 and every other week seems to be a good rule of thumb. Too much nitrogen will give you lovely greenery and no flowers. Agapanthus like regular deep watering but the drainage has to be excellent because the fleshy roots do not like to sit in moisture and can rot. This means the soil medium should have some peat in it and the pot should have rocks in the bottom and that same pot should have holes in the bottom of it! The Agapanthus Blue Triumphator is a deciduous plant and requires a rest period in the winter to “set” the flowers for the next season. What this means is you will want to move the pot to a dark, cold but frost free location. During the winter months you water sparingly, without letting the soil dry out completely. You can increase your watering once the leaves emerge in late winter/early spring.

Outdoor growing tips ~ Zones 7 and 8

When planting outdoors in warmer zones you need to plant the rhizomes about 5 cm deep to avoid the frost. Plant them in sunny south, southwest locations that are very well drained. Create a condition that contains their roots, remember the plants love to be pot bound, the ones that are, produce the most flowers. Any areas that are sheltered or can provide reflected heat are ideal as they will increase the chances of survival throughout the winter. These areas can be close to the house foundation or patios even sidewalks around the house. On the wet coast areas that are under an overhang will provide shelter from rains which can cause crown rot.

The Agapanthus does not mind less than great soil and in fact if the soil is too rich there can be lots of lush foliage and not enough flowers produced. When the foliage has died back cover the deciduous Agapanthus with



a 10cm thick layer of mulch over the crown. You can use coarse bark nuggets (great in the wet winter areas), straw or leaf mulch.

Evergreen Agapanthus Plants

When it comes to evergreen Agapanthus they should not be split much earlier than 4 years either but when you go ahead and do, it should be done immediately after they flower. Evergreen forms can be over wintered in a slightly cool, bright room and treated as houseplants. Evergreen Agapanthus can only stay outdoors in zone 8 and you should mulch around the crown and protect the greenery with a sort of teepee of conifer boughs. Who knew there was so much to know? I'm looking forward to watching my clump inch it's way along to eventually produce flowers when it's good an ready! I've got the time and the patience for it!

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