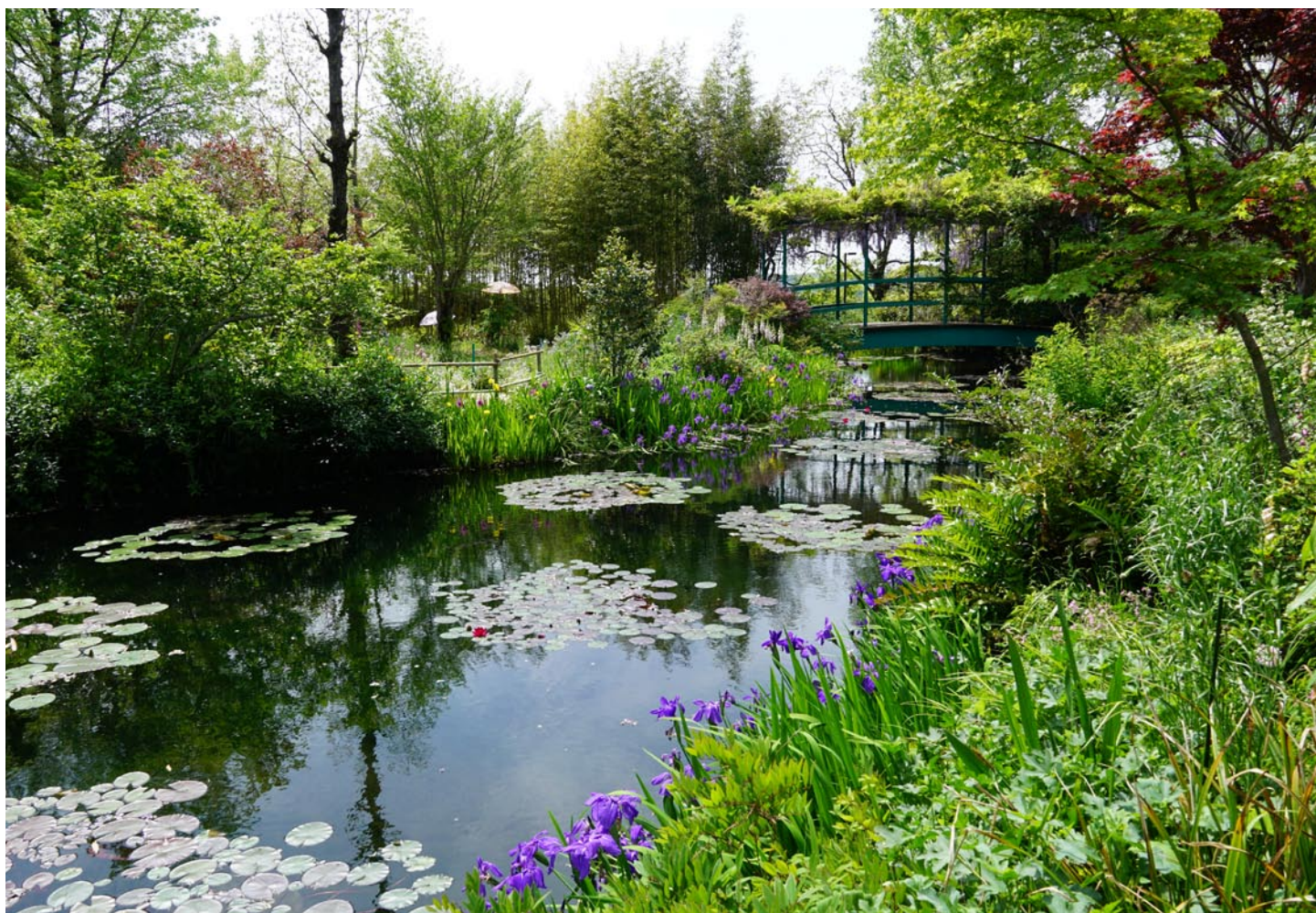




Plant News Glittering Prizes Across And On The Pond—The RHS Awards Of Garden Merit 2022

By Caroline Holmes

What makes a plant not just garden worthy, but highly recommended for its looks, hardiness, and interest for the amateur gardener? In the UK, look out for the acronym AGM—Award of Garden Merit, created and awarded by a panel on behalf of the Royal Horticultural Society (RHS). The criteria are:

- Excellent for ordinary use in appropriate conditions
- Available
- Of good constitution
- Essentially stable in form and color
- Reasonably resistant to pests and diseases

Pictured above, Red flowers of *N. Froebelii* in the Jardin Monet Marmottan, Kitagawa Village, Japan, a re-creation of Monet's water garden at Giverny.

In February 2022, the RHS invited me to chair and create a panel to update the AGM list for hardy waterlilies. IWGS members James Allison and James Bennett agreed to join with Carlos Magdalena of Kew, Alex Hankey of RHS Wisley, Chris Thorogood of the Oxford Botanic Garden, and Ian Murphy of Burnby Hall near Hull, which holds a national collection of hardy *Nymphaea*. We were presented with a list of the 309 *Nymphaea* that were recorded on the RHS database, we whittled this down to 70 including 4 that were not on the original list. The panel, either in person or online, met for final discussions and voting in June, the day was hosted by James Bennett at the glorious Bennetts Water Gardens, Weymouth. We could not have asked for a finer day, the gardens were immaculate and dozens of the *Nymphaea* were in full flower. Discussions were open, frank, and detailed, the final awards were voted unanimously, I have included the waterlily listing on the following pages as well as a summary of the comments.



N. 'Mrs. Richmond' nestling in lily pads at Bennetts Water Gardens.

AGMs retained

Hardiness rating

Nymphaea 'Escarboucle' H5
Described by one of the judges as "good solid red, reliable performer," actually my favorite!

Nymphaea 'Gladstoniana' H5
Described by one of the judges as "best large white for ponds and less than ideal situations."

Nymphaea 'Gonnère' H5
Described by one of the judges as "still the best large white, large blooms."

Nymphaea 'James Brydon' H5
Described by two of the judges as "reliable old variety" and "eye catching small blooms." Incidentally grown by Monet in his gardens at Giverny.

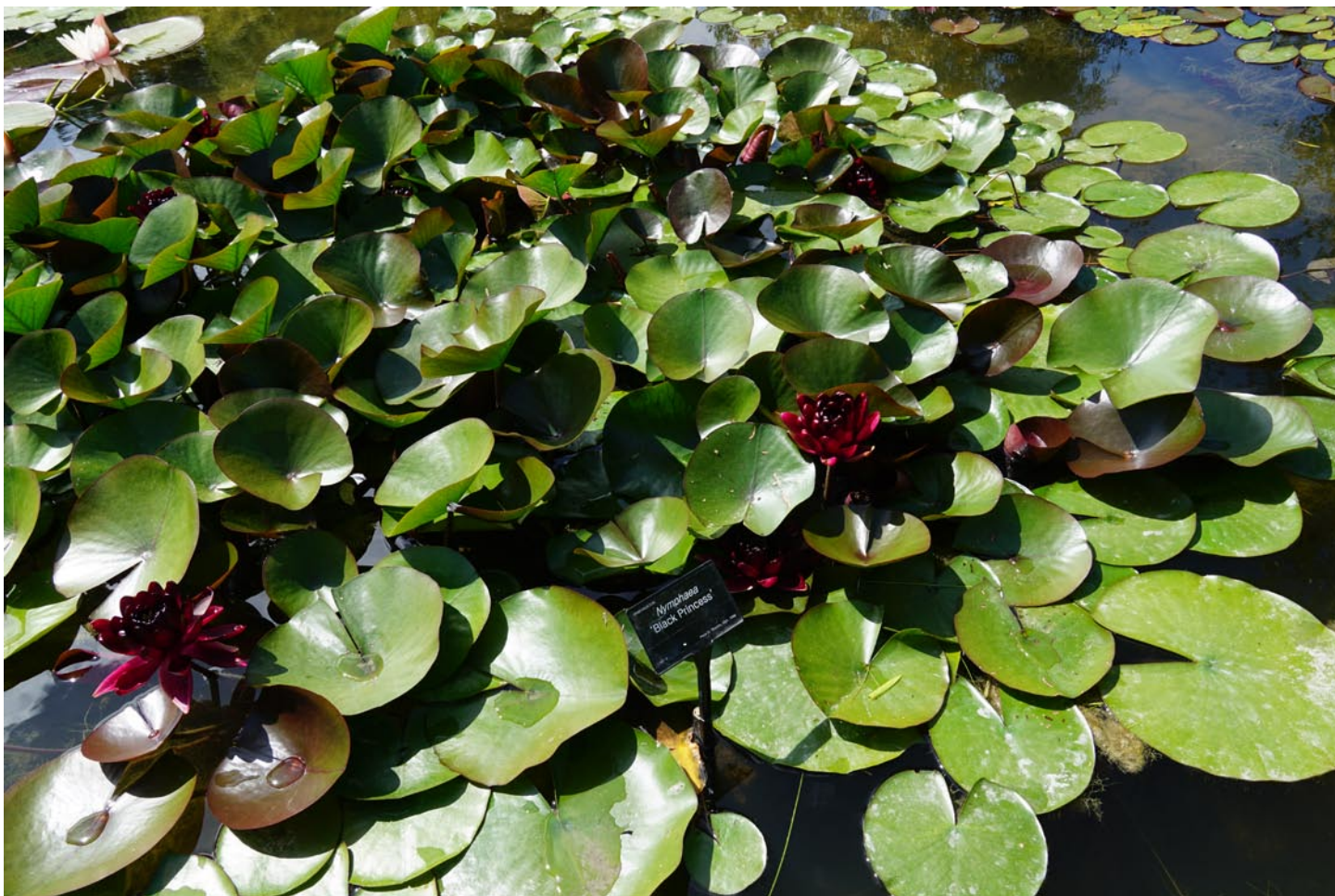
Nymphaea 'Pygmaea Helvola' H5
Described by one of the judges as "best miniature yellow, accompanied by attractive leaf spotting."

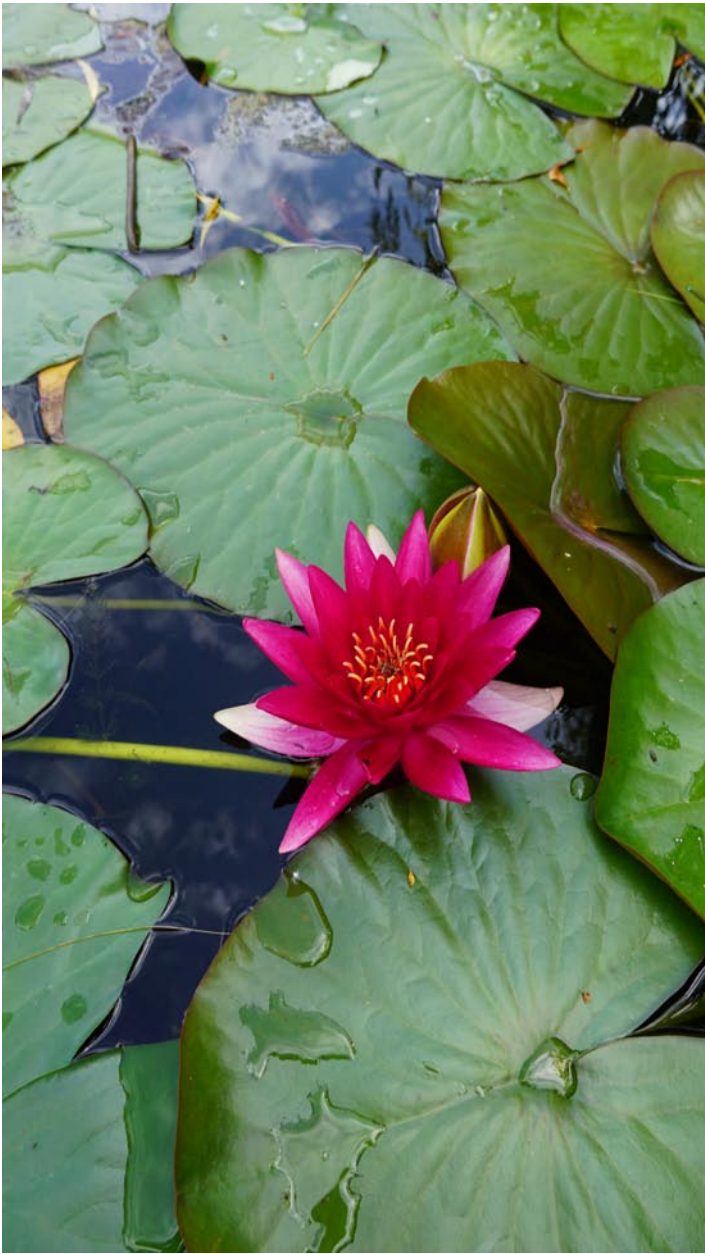
NEW AGMs were awarded to: Hardiness rating

Nymphaea 'Aurora' H5
A nice free flowering miniature waterlily, readily available and suitable for small ponds.

Nymphaea 'Black Princess' H5
Popular due to the darkness of red, judged as "best burgundy waterlily, steady establisher."

N. 'Black Princess' at Bennetts Water Gardens.





N. 'Escarboucle' at Bennetts Water Gardens.

Nymphaea 'Colorado' H5
Judged as being a "prolific bloomer" and the prominent flowers grow high above the water and fade well.

Nymphaea 'Froebelii' H5
Judged as a medium, very free flowering and reliable red waterlily, the cup develops into a star shaped bloom.

Nymphaea 'Hermine' H5
A very free flowering medium-large lily, well-behaved and one of the best white waterlilies. Can flower well in dappled shade, slightly scented and one of the first to flower.

Nymphaea 'Joey Tomocik' H5
Very large, but good. The bright yellow waterlilies are free flowering, held several inches above emerald green pads, best grown in larger ponds. Judged as good as 'Marliacea Chromatella'.

Nymphaea 'Laydekeri Fulgens' H5
Free flowering with attractive red flowers that deepen into a rich burgundy. Good ratio of leaves to blooms and does not get too congested.

Nymphaea 'Mayla' H5
Reliably brilliant magenta-colored flowers with good ratio to pads, best for large ponds and lakes.

Nymphaea 'Mrs Richmond' H5
A reliable large bi-color pink/white, blooms fade well darkening to a deep satin pink, subtle colors and sublime.

Nymphaea odorata var. *minor* H5
A good, small, star-shaped white, one of the best miniatures and very popular, a lovely plant for a small area.

Nymphaea 'Perry's Baby Red' H5
Good, small, distinctive cup shape, red waxy blooms that are compact and free-flowering, the flowers stay open later than many. Suitable for containers and small ponds. Ranked as top 10 of waterlilies.

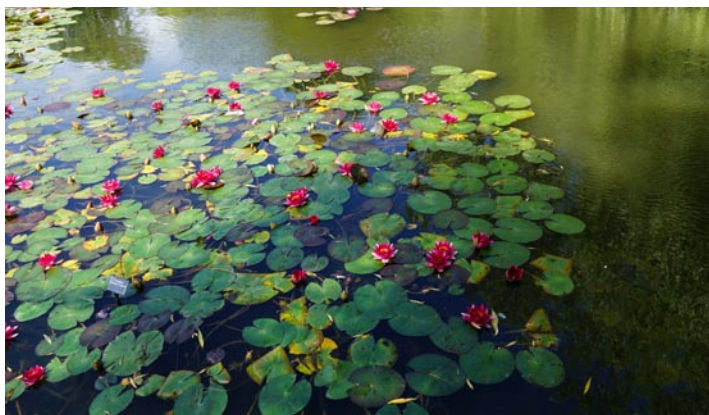
Nymphaea 'Pink Sensation' H5
Distinctive pad and flower with good reliable cerise pink blooms, very free-flowering and does not get congested.

Nymphaea 'Texas Dawn' H5
Eye-catching vivid yellow petals with new pads speckled with deep purple, the flowers are held high and stay open relatively late. One for big ponds.

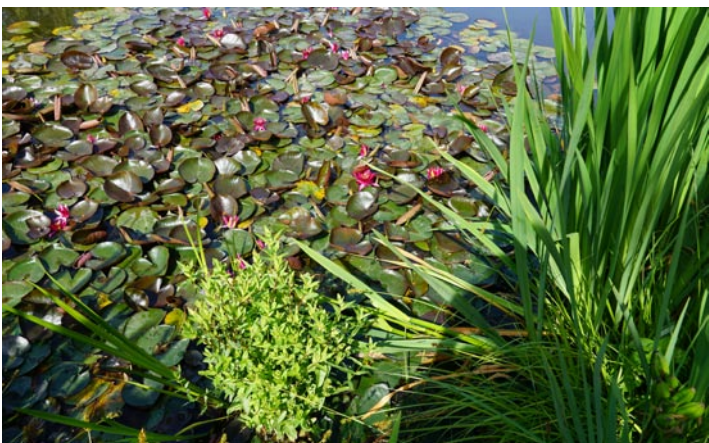
Nymphaea 'Weymouth Red' H5
A red waterlily hybrid for small and medium ponds. Hybrid by Bennetts Water Gardens, UK, 1991.

The Forum Panel was not able to reconfirm or rescind and therefore retained the RHS AGM for:

Nymphaea 'Marliacea Chromatella' H5
Despite competition this classic waterlily is still the best pale yellow, reliable it is a strong grower which stands out of the water



N. 'Laydekeri Fulgens' at Bennetts Water Gardens.



N. 'Weymouth Red' at Bennetts Water Gardens.

Ones To Watch Out For

We all decided that ready availability was of equal importance, so we created a separate list for *Nymphaea* showing great promise, but that are still not well enough known. These were:

- *Nymphaea* 'Darwin'
- *Nymphaea* 'Geisha Girl'
- *Nymphaea* 'White Sensation'

I was delighted to see that four hardy *Nymphaea* bred by Latour-Marliac are still making the cut although Rob Sheldon informs me 'Aurora' needs extra potash.

About the Author

Caroline Holmes is a garden historian, international speaker, and author of 12 books including "Water Lilies and Bory Latour-Marliac, the genius behind Monet's water lilies." Her website is www.hortihistory.com from which she can be emailed.

N. 'Gladstoniana' in the main lake with views to the pavilion at Bennetts Water Gardens.

