



Cannas

*For more information about the
Colorado Water Garden Society
or other aspects of pond keeping along the front-range go to:*

<http://www.colowatergardensociety.org>

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Cannas are popular plants for terrestrial gardens, bringing a bold texture and tropical flare to the summer garden. Gardeners are often surprised to learn that many hybrids also do well in bogs or shallow water, making them perfect additions to the water garden.

Hybrids for Ponds:

Longwood Cannas -

This series of aquatic cannas was developed at Longwood Gardens by crossing the water-loving species, *Canna glauca*, with different terrestrial canna varieties. The resulting hybrids share very similar growth characteristics and foliage, with varying flower colors.

'Erebus' - Soft grey-green, lance-shaped leaves accented with pink blooms. Grows to a height of 5'.

'Endeavor' - Similar foliage as 'Erebus' topped with bright red blooms. Grows to 5' tall.

'Ra' - Foliage is grey-green and lance-shaped. Blooms are bright yellow. Grows to 5'.

'Taney' - Orange colored blooms highlight the grey-green foliage. Grows to 5'.

Other Canna Hybrids that thrive in water -

'Australia' - Deep red/almost black foliage topped with bright red blooms. Grows to 6'.

'Bengal Tiger' ('Pretoria') - Yellow and green striped foliage with bright orange blooms. Grows to 5'.

'Blueberry Sparkler' - Burgundy foliage with bright, bubble-gum pink blooms. Grows to 6'.

'Chiquita Punch' - Bright green foliage topped with brilliant orange blooms. A shorter hybrid that grows 2-3' tall.

'Chocolate Sunrise' - Chocolate colored foliage with bright orange flowers. Grows 2-3' tall.

'Compact Pink' - Solid green foliage topped with bright pink blooms. Grows to 3'.

'Ermine' - Blue-green foliage topped with creamy white blooms. Grows to 4'.

'Intrigue' - Narrow burgundy leaves and orange blooms. Grows to 5'.

'Panache' - Narrow grey-green leaves topped with bi-colored blooms of cream and pink. Grows to 5'.

'Paton' - Narrow grey-green leaves topped with bi-colored blooms of cream and yellow. Grows to 5'.

'Pink Sunburst' - Foliage has stripes of green, cream and pink. Blooms are peachy pink in color. Grows to 3'.

'Tony' - Burgundy foliage with flushes of deep olive green. Topped with bright orange blooms. Grows to 6'.

'Phaison' (Tropicanna) - A very bright and colorful variety with foliage striped in green, yellow, orange and pink. Brilliant orange flowers on plants that can grow to 6' tall.

Growth Requirements:

Cannas do best when planted in an area that receives full sun (a minimum of 6 hours) throughout the day.

Because they are semi-tropical and not hardy here in CO, they shouldn't be planted outdoors until after the last frost and once the temperatures have consistently warmed. Late May through mid-June is the average time frame for planting.

When placing cannas in the pond at the beginning of the season, it is best to raise them closer to the water's surface using cinder blocks or a shallow planting shelf. As they grow larger, they can be lowered to a maximum depth of 6" of water over the crown (where the stems meet the root system) of the plant.

Summer Maintenance:

To ensure optimum growth and blooming of your cannas, fertilize using pond safe fertilizer tablets at the rate recommended by the manufacturer (usually 1 tablet/gallon of soil) every 2 - 3 weeks throughout the summer months.

Trim off spent blooms to encourage the plant to put energy into new blooms rather than seed production. Check your cannas for pest and disease symptoms (outlined below) and treat accordingly.

Common Pests and Diseases:

The most common pests to affect cannas are leaf rollers, aphids and Japanese beetles. Canna leaf rollers are moth larvae that roll a portion of a leaf around themselves to provide protection as they feed. These larvae can be removed by hand as you find them.

Aphids tend to appear toward the end of the summer and typically gather on young growth and on flower buds. These can be removed by spraying them off with a hose.

Japanese beetles are the newest pests to make themselves at home in our region. These shiny green beetles chew on the foliage of many plants, and luckily aquatic Cannas are not their primary target. A few may make their way into your pond and onto your Canna flowers, chewing petals as they go. These pests can be removed by hand in the early morning hours and placed into a bucket of soapy water.

Cannas are also susceptible to plant viruses which cause stunted and distorted growth, streaked or spotted foliage, and petals with streaks of white throughout.

Cannas infected with a virus should be removed from the pond and composted since no treatment is available and the virus can be spread to your healthy cannas by sucking insects such as aphids or by tools such as pruners.

Preventative measures include taking care to purchase healthy plants from a trusted source and destroying a plant that is showing signs of infection.

Overwintering:

At the end of the season, pull the cannas out of the water and let them drain and dry out. After the first heavy frost/light freeze knocks back their foliage, trim the foliage down to 1" from the soil surface.

Leaving the cannas in their containers, they can be moved to any area where the pots will not freeze like a garage, crawl space, or basement.

Halfway through the winter (late December/early January), water them once - more often can cause the plants to rot.

In late March or early April, when growth starts to appear in one container, water again. One or two days later, turn over the pots and using a shovel, break the soil mass up while trying to preserve as many of the cream-colored rhizomes as possible. Separate the cream-colored rhizomes with their growth tips and roots from the darkly colored dead rhizomes. Discard the darkly colored dead rhizomes.

Repot the healthy rhizomes by placing one, two, or three rhizomes in 1 to 3-gallon pots of soil. Place these newly planted divisions in a sunny room. Water the newly planted rhizomes enough to keep them moist. After one to three weeks, they will sprout new growth.

If you do not have garage space to use this method, you can also bring cannas inside to a sunny room or greenhouse.

Trim the foliage back as needed throughout the winter as it ages and let the plants stay growing throughout the winter. The foliage can get leggy but the new growth in the spring will be more robust. Plants can then be divided and replanted outdoors in late May through mid-June for another season of enjoyment in your pond.