

RED AFRICAN TIGER LOTUS

GVAC Tank Notes, Oct-Dec 2011

By Chase Klinesteker



Potted Red African Tiger Lotus

DESCRIPTION AND CULTIVATION

The African Tiger Lotus, *Nymphaea zenkeri*, is one of my favorite plants primarily because of its varied forms and striking leaf colors. It is a true aquatic and can have both underwater leaves and floating lily pads as large as your hand or larger. The underwater leaves are heart-shaped, thin and delicate, but very colorful with red, pink, yellow, purple, and brown in a mottled pattern that is quite variable. Underwater leaves are more attractive and can be maintained by snipping off those going to the surface. Surface leaves are tougher and usually green or brownish, but also can have mottled colors. It comes from West African rivers, can withstand a PH range of 5-8, and likes warmer water temperatures of 72-86. It will thrive with medium to bright light. I get good growth and reproduction in a 70 gallon tank with a 2 bulb shoplight over it. Try potting them in small plastic pans with ½ inch of potting soil in the bottom and gravel over it, as they are heavy feeders. Intense light and iron supplementation can spur growth even faster. Give them plenty of room as they can grow 2 feet or more in height and width. Place them in the foreground, background, or as a centerpiece in any tank as an attractive addition. They reproduce by runners, bulbs forming on the roots, and seeds. The flower is quite large, white with a yellow center, and protrudes above the water. It is said to open up at night. Propagation is much better if they are allowed to develop surface leaves.

Because the leaves are delicate, shipping can be hard on the plants, and some report that bulbs purchased may be damaged in shipping. Buying them at auction from hobbyists usually gives better results. If you obtain bulbs, don't bury them completely in the gravel or they may rot. Plantlets from runners is the easiest way to reproduce them when enough roots are formed to pot them.

The Red African Tiger Lotus is perhaps one of the most colorful aquarium plants available. They are easy to grow and reproduce, and provide a complete contrast to the majority of aquarium plants. Just keep them away from big, plant digging cichlids!



Red Tiger Lotus 4 inch bloom in 70 gallon aquarium