

The addition of graceful water gardens at The Kampong has created a Zen-like atmosphere in this hidden oasis. The Lotus Pond shown here showcases three cultivars of lotus as well as numerous waterlilies. (See “Exploring The Kampong’s Aquatic Allure,” page 17.) *Photo by David Jones*

Exploring The Kampong's Aquatic Allure

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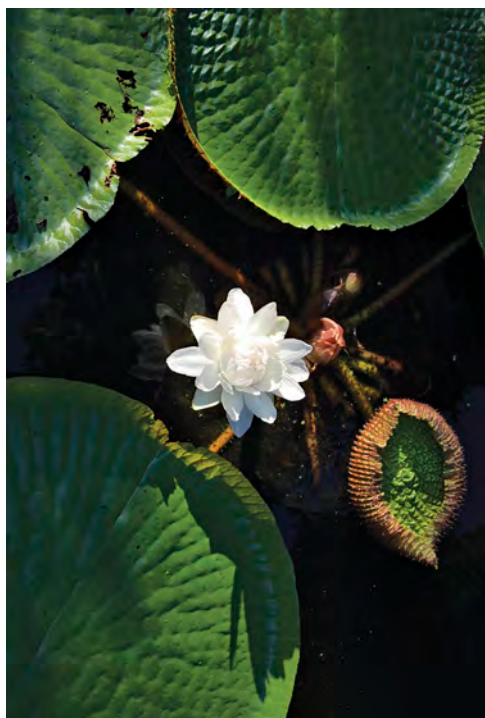
At The Kampong, a silent ritual begins with each new morning. As the sun ascends beyond Biscayne Bay, the ponds adorning the garden undergo a transformation of unimaginable scale. One by one, elegant floral buds atop slender stalks open to reveal flowers of exquisite color and form. Honey bees and dragonflies soon converge on the scene, enticed by the profusion of these floral displays. Until the first flowers close with the fading day, some ten hours later, each pond boasts a riotous mélange of hue and fragrance without parallel in the garden.

The cultivation and display of lotuses, waterlilies, and other aquatic plants is a fairly new direction for The Kampong, where collections of tropical and subtropical trees and shrubs have reigned supreme in the garden since the time of David Fairchild. Lotuses in particular, ubiquitous in the landscapes of East Asia, are a natural choice for display at The Kampong with its special attention to the cultivation of Southeast Asian kampung¹ plants. While aquatic plants of one kind or another are portrayed as having spiritual or religious significance, deeply rooted in Far Eastern cultures, they owe their popularity today to the combined effect of flower and foliage. Since the installation of its first pond in 2006, the presence of water features imbued with provocative lotuses and waterlilies has rendered The Kampong infinitely more interesting, adding an unexpected dimension to an already enchanting garden.

1 The Malay word for village or compound and the origin of the name "The Kampong."



▲ The Kampong's first water feature, designed in the form of the yin yang symbol. This pond is located just inside the garden's main gate.



◀ Amazon water lily, Victoria 'Longwood Hybrid'

In the aftermath of the devastating hurricanes of 2005, then garden director Larry Schokman seized an opportunity that would forever transform The Kampong – the construction of its first water garden. On a storm-ravaged site just beyond the garden's main gate, he constructed a circular (20' diameter) pool, often referred to as the "yin yang pond" because of its

- ▶ *Nelumbo* 'Bali Red'
 - ▶ *Nymphaea* 'Albert Greenberg'
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curvilinear wall of cascading water. In 2007, a larger, more ambitious water garden, the Lotus Pond, was installed through a generous gift from Kampong Fellow Georgette Ballance. Designed by Larry Schokman and Miami architect Camilo Rosales, this two-tiered, kidney-shaped pond (roughly 28 by 44 feet) located near the historic Fairchild-Sweeney House boasts a dazzling display of aquatic plants unmatched in Miami.

Of the several hundred species, varieties, and cultivars of waterlilies (*Nymphaea*) available today, thirty are on display in The Kampong's water gardens. Most are tropical in origin and bloom during the day; they enthrall because they are the largest and showiest of the waterlilies, possessing the widest range of color and form in flower and foliage. The flower of 'Green Smoke' has a most unusual color: its inner petals are greenish yellow tipped in blue, while its outer petals are blue. Flowers of 'King of Siam', an introduction from Thailand, produce up to 100 deep blue petals in two series, making it a "double" flower. Other beauties include 'Miami Rose' (petals raspberry red, leaves green splashed with burgundy), 'Islamorada' (petals purple with white spots), 'Director George T.



Moore' (petals deep violet blue, leaves green mottled purple), and 'St. Louis Gold' (petals deep yellow, new leaves bronzy with purple blotches). As if the vibrant colors and patterns of flowers and foliage

*...like floating pizza
pans on steroids*

aren't sufficiently captivating, the pleasant, often sweet, fragrances emanating from these flowers are intoxicating. Still other cultivars are

night-blooming tropicals: 'Red Cup' and 'Red Flare' (both with deep red petals, the latter with reddish bronze leaves) and 'Trudy Slocum' (white petals) produce flowers that open around dusk and close by noon the following day, offering unforgettable floral pageantry for evening and night visitors. In addition, The Kampong exhibits some spectacular, hardy (temperate) waterlily cultivars, including 'Mayla' with fuchsia pink petals and plum-colored leaves, and *Nymphaea mexicana* 'Cape Canaveral', a special Florida native with deep yellow petals.

The crown jewels of The Kampong's aquatic plant collection are the lotuses (*Nelumbo*) occupying the upper tier of the Lotus Pond. At the collection's core is the pink-flowered cultivar 'Bali Red', collected by Larry Schokman and colleague Monroe Birdsey in Bali, Indonesia, in 1994, and subsequently maintained in a private nursery by James Thiele, a long-standing friend of The Kampong. Additional lotus cultivars in cultivation at the garden are 'Momo Botan' (deep rosy pink petals with yellowish bases), 'Mrs. Perry D. Slocum' (petals change from pink to yellowish to cream over a period of three days), and 'Maggie Bell Slocum' (petals deep lavender-pink with yellowish bases).

In 2007, The Kampong received a donation of several Amazon waterlilies (*Victoria*). Eight plants of the cultivars 'Adventure' and 'Longwood Hybrid' now grace the garden's ponds; both were created from crosses between the true species *Victoria amazonica* and

V. cruziana. Their spectacular, circular, spiny leaves (like floating pizza pans on steroids) and large, white, night-blooming flowers combine to make them botanical curiosities without rival. Despite being cold-sensitive (they grow best when the water temperature is above 74°F), all of the garden's Amazon waterlilies survived their first winter unscathed.

Lotuses, waterlilies, and Amazon waterlilies are not the only denizens of these water gardens. An assortment of other aquatic plants – Floating Heart (*Nymphoides*), Amazon and Ozelot Sword Plants (*Echinodorus*), Madagascar Lace Plants (*Aponogeton*), Marsilea Fern (*Marsilea*), Cow Lily (*Nuphar*), Pickerelweed (*Pontederia*), and Papyrus (*Cyperus*) – further infuse these ponds with tropical exuberance. African cichlids and swordtails navigate the waters, providing not only visual appeal but also ridding the ponds of unwanted mosquito larvae.

What other benefits can these collections provide? They provide a vital teaching tool, illustrating to students and visitors the diversity in form and function that exists in the plant kingdom through ingenious morphological specialization and reproductive strategies needed for survival in an aquatic environment. The fact that some waterlily flowers drown unsuspecting flies and bees in fluid to secure pollen stuck to their bodies is provocative. Some cultivars are even able to produce copies of themselves from mature leaves through a phenomenon known as “vivipary” – plantlets detach from the parent plant as mature leaves die – a convenient way to propagate waterlilies in a nursery.

The tranquil water gardens of The Kampong have clearly made an indelible impact on all who come here, drawing them ever closer to a vision of paradise.

This piece was just one of the articles featured in the print magazine
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