



History of Victoria - Queen of the Pools



# Her Majestic Presence from above

This giant water lily is the only living plant that can be identified miles above earth by hi-resolution satellite imagery.







In its natural environment, *Victoria* is found in the floodplains of South America. Seeds float to new locations and germinate when the floodwaters arrive. Seeds remain dormant in the mud when the waters recede.



In the early 1800's various explorers searched for more than 30 years to discover *Victoria* in the wilds of South America.





# A Queen was Born

Victoria was named as a new genus of waterlily by John Lindley, an English botanist in 1837.

He named her *Victoria regia*, after Victoria, the young British Queen.

The current name, *Victoria amazonica*, did not come into widespread use until the twentieth century.



# Queen in the Great Rivers

There are two distinct species of *Victoria* found in the watersheds of two huge river systems of South America.

*Victoria amazonica* is found in the Amazon river system.

*Victoria cruziana* grows in the Parana river systems and other cooler rivers further south.





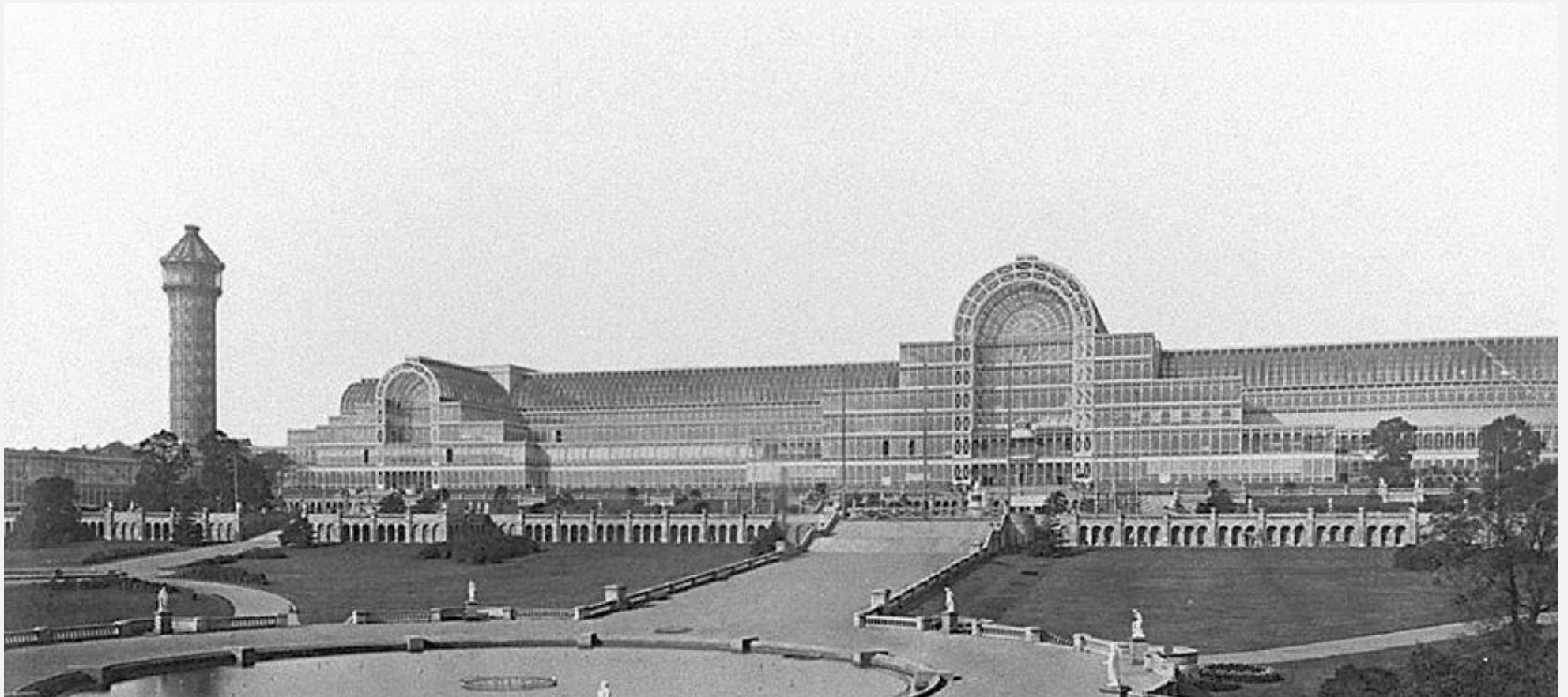


It took 12 years for any seeds to survive their transit across the ocean and germinate outside of their native location.

The first *Victoria* plants to flower in cultivation were grown in Chatsworth, England in 1849 by gardener Joseph Paxton.

During the Great Exhibition in 1851, the huge glass Crystal Palace exhibition hall was built in Hyde Park in England and filled with the latest innovations at the time including the *Victoria*.

The building design by Paxton was inspired by the architecture of the *Victoria* leaf platter superstructure.







Longwood Gardens first began growing *Victoria* in our newly designed water lily pools in 1957



In 1989 the waterlily display was redesigned by Sir Peter Shephard into five larger, dramatic pools.





# Creation of the *Victoria* x 'Longwood Hybrid'

In 1961, Patrick Nutt (right), gardener in charge of Longwood's aquatic display at that time, made multiple crosses between the two water-platter species.

The final selection showed extreme hybrid vigor, with leaves growing to five to six foot in diameter. It also had larger and more numerous flowers and was reasonably cold tolerant which extended its season.

This cultivar is not available commercially, but can be found on display at botanical gardens around the world, including in England, Japan, and the United States.





The cross between these two *Victoria* species create the  
Longwood hybrid

*V. amazonica*

- Brazil
- Red pigmentation
- Smaller margins
- Oval seeds
- Sepals have thorns
- Male parent plant

*V. cruziana*

- Bolivia/Paraguay
- Light green
- Large upturned margins
- Round seeds
- Sepals nearly thorn less
- Female parent plant







*Victoria cruziana*





*Victoria amazonica*





*Victoria 'Longwood Hybrid'*



# Growing a Queen

Victoria plants are started here from seeds in the greenhouses in February and are ready for display at the end of May each year.

They grow and bloom throughout summer and the seeds are collected in September.

Today Longwood's summer display of *Victoria* and other water plants continues to evolve, amaze and delight visitors each year.

