

## *Spathiphyllum* H.W. Schott

## Peace Lilies

(*Hydnostachyon*, at times formerly included in the genus *Anthurium*)

**Other Common Names:** Espatifilo, Mauna Loa, Spaths, Spathe Flower, White Flag.

**Family:** *Spathiphyllum* spp. are members of the Araceae in the subfamily Monsteroideae and tribe Spathiphyllae.

**Cold Hardiness:** Roots may be cold hardy to USDA zone 10a but shoots are injured by even light frosts; best in USDA hardiness zones 10b to 13.

**Foliage:** Evergreen, alternate, simple, narrow to broadly elliptic (5" 6" to 20" (24") long by 3" to 9" wide borne on slender 6" to 18" elongated petioles; blades have impressed pinnate venation, entire to undulate margins, elongated acuminate tips and cuneate to acute bases; most taxa have lush dark green leaves that may or may not be variegated with yellowish or whitish blotches.

**Flower:** As is typical of many members of the aroid family, the tiny individual flowers are a greenish white, creamy yellow, or white aggregated in densely packed in a 1" to 4" long spadix, framed or surrounded by an often showy, greenish white, yellowish, or more often clean white spathe; the *Anthurium*-like spathes vary in size, but are typically concave, broadly ovate to elongated elliptic, leaf-like, and 4" to 8" (12") long; flowers are usually held at or above the foliage, so they are noticeable and occurs whenever environmental conditions are suitable; some taxa have fragrant flowers; the aggregate spadix can be narrow or stout, on the stouter taxa it resembles a war mace with a white shield behind it; maybe those taxa should be called war lilies rather than peace lilies?

**Fruit:** Fruit are short spikes or racemes of small white berries which are seldom produced in cultivation; many hybrid taxa in the American nursery/greenhouse trade are sterile and do not set fruit.

**Stem / Bark:** Stems — acaulescent; not seen other than perhaps at the soils/substrate surface, petioles and peduncles arise from below ground; Buds — not apparent as the leaves arise from an underground stem; Bark — not applicable.

**Habit:** Peace Lilies are typically coarse textured lush evergreen clumps of leaves originating from an underground crown; most taxa mature at 12" to 24" (36") in height with a similar spread; the bold foliage is pleasantly coarse textured; growth rates are slow to medium.

**Cultural Requirements:** An easy plant to grow given a good water source as most are not very tolerant to salinity; very durable in interiorscapes; outdoors in our region, they need a protected location; avoid drying winds, exposure to salty water, and direct sun; cold tolerance limits outdoor use, other than as annuals, to only the warmest portions of our region; in containers use a good general purpose potting mix, outdoors plants should be grown in fertile acidic to neutral loamy organic soils with a steady but well drained moisture supply.

**Pathological Problems:** Typical interiorscape/greenhouse pests such as spider mites, scales and mealybugs are occasional problems; leaf spots are reported; overwatering may encourage *Cylindrocaladium* root rot.

**Ornamental Assets:** Lush dark green or variegated foliage, white spathes, and tolerance to very low light levels are the principal assets.

**Limitations & Liabilities:** Reported to be toxic to humans, cats, and dogs as most tissues contain calcium oxalates; the sap of some taxa is also a skin irritant; most taxa are intolerant of full sun or elevated salinity levels.

**Landscape Utilization:** One of our most reliable interiorscape plants, *Spathiphyllum* are outstanding as houseplants, conservatory or interiorscape plants, but are also a common component of tropical outdoor landscapes where they often serve as groundcovers, shade borders, or shade accents; it is sometimes used in shaded protected locations in deep South Texas landscapes where it is often injured by winter cold; Peace Lilies make excellent container plants for shaded patios or can be used as a summer accent in shaded annual beds.

**Other Comments:** The genus name derives from the Greek name for spathe-like leaves in reference to the flowers; *Spathiphyllum* are reported to remove benzene, formaldehyde, and other environmental contaminants from interiorscape atmospheres; one of our nation's most popular interiorscape plants.

**Native Habitat:** Most of the hybrid cultivars in the American nursery/greenhouse trade are of garden origin, but the genus is native to tropical portions of Central and South America as well as Southeast Asia.

**Related Taxa:** Most taxa in this genus grown in the U.S. are of hybrid origin; there are depending upon the authority cited from 35 to 60 species in this monocotyledonous genus; species often reported to be involved in the development of modern hybrid cultivars include *Spathiphyllum cannifolium* (J.C. Dryander) H.W. Schott

(*Pothos canniifolius*), *Spathiphyllum floribundum* (J.J. Linden & E.F. Andre) B.E. Brown (*Anthurium floribundum*), and *Spathiphyllum wallisii* Regel; 'Mauna Loa' and 'Clevelandii' are two of the more popular large cultivars.

**Anthurium** H.W. Schott  
(*Podospadix*)

## **Anthurium**

- Also known as Flamingo Flower, *Anthurium* is a large tropical genus of mostly acaulescent evergreen herbaceous perennials in the monocotyledonous family Araceae subfamily Pothoideae tribe Anthurieae; in foliage these compact tropical evergreen herbaceous perennials remind one of *Caladium bicolor* or small narrow-leaved *Colocasia* or *Alocasia* to which they are related; foliage of most *Anthurium* are cordate, but may in some species be hastate or peltate, or even rarely palmately lobed; cultivated taxa range from 12" to 24" (36") tall with a similar spread; most taxa in cultivation have dark green cordate leaves with showy flowers; there are about 500 species in this large genus of which about a dozen and their hybrids predominate in the trade.
- *Anthurium* are popular landscape plants in tropical, USDA zones 10 to 13, but are intolerant to frost and are grown in our area mainly as patio / lanai container plants, interiorscape plants, or cut flower or corsage subjects; chilling injury occurs when temperatures dip much below 50°F for any extended time; the main attraction of these taxa are the highly showy with various combinations of colors for the spathes and spadices; the color of the spathes on taxa in commerce are often vibrant, surfaces glossy, and the textures are nearly plastic resulting in flowers that are so perfect people often touch them to confirm they are real; spathes are often flatter, thicker and held more horizontally than those of *Spathiphyllum*; flowers of *Anthurium* are long lasting both on the plants and when used as cut flowers or corsages components.
- Mites, scale, mealybugs, leaf spots, snails, nematodes on sandy soils, and grasshoppers are reported as occasional problems; plants require moist well drained high organic matter soils with good fertility; *Anthurium* perform best with shade, suffering in full sun in our region; while associated with such exotic venues as Hawaii and other tropical islands, most taxa are native to the North American and South American tropics; the genus name derives from the Greek words for flower, anthos, and tail, oura, in reference to the shape of the spadices of plants in this genus.

**References:** Broschat and Meerow, 1991; Crawford, 2003; Dehgan, 1998; Llamas, 2003; Rauch and Weissich, 2000; Riffle, 1998; Stresau, 1986; Watkins and Sheehan, 1975; Whistler, 2000.