

Scientific name: *Colchicum* ‘Waterlily’

(Raised by J. J. Kerbert from a cross of
C. autumnale ‘Alboplenum’ with *C. speciosum* ‘Album’)

Family: Colchicaceae

Common name: Autumn Crocus

Hardiness zone: Zones 4-9

Exposure: Full sun

Form: Cormous, herbaceous perennial.

Soil Requirements: Humus-rich, well-drained soil. Excellent for naturalizing in open lawn areas, and is drought tolerant making it a great addition to the dry garden, also.

Height: Anywhere from 5 to 12 inches.

Leaf: *Colchicum* leaves can get quite large, and *C.* ‘Waterlily’ is no exception, with semi-erect, narrowly ovate leaves averaging 7 to 10 inches long and half as wide. The majestic leaves appear in spring from the same corm that produced last fall’s flower. This process is exhausting to the corm, causing it to wither and die. The new leaves grow, photosynthesize, and send food and energy down into a new developing corm that will produce the autumn flower. In mid-summer the leaves disappear, leaving a blank canvas for the flowers to appear in fall. At Stonecrop we mark our *Colchicum* areas with bamboo canes to remind us not to disturb our sleeping *Colchicums*.

Flower: *C.* ‘Waterlily’ is the largest fully double *Colchicum*. Beginning in late September, *Colchicum* ‘Waterlily’ pushes through the soil to produce large, double, lilac-pink flowers that demand attention. The flower head is 6 inches wide, comprised of approximately 20 tepals and stands about 4 to 5 inches from the ground. Each corm can produce anywhere from 1 to 6 “waterlily-esque” flowers, giving this treasure a fitting name.

Colchicum ‘Waterlily’ is an amazing addition to the fall garden. At Stonecrop, *C.* ‘Waterlily’ is planted amongst *Gymnaster savatieri* which not only helps keep the plant erect but also looks incredible as a plant combination.

Is it a Crocus or a Colchicum?

The basic differences between the two genera are actually quite easy to distinguish. *Colchicum* is now in the family Colchicaceae (formerly Liliaceae), and has **six** stamens, and a **superior** ovary. *Crocus* is in the Iridaceae family and has **three** stamens, and an **inferior** ovary. If the leaves are the only way to tell, then look closely for the central white stripe on the top of the leaf surface; this means that it is a *Crocus*, since *Colchicums* do not have this stripe. A little botany can go a long way!

