

Life Cycle of the American Lotus –by Andy Hahn

Slender, and tightly wrapped in two parallel rolls, the leaf of the American lotus emerges from the river. The water is shallow. If it's a foot deep, it's barely more. But this is hard to judge too precisely since the underwater earth nowhere approaches what could be called solid ground. Rather it is a muddy suspension of dirt in water that can swallow a foot whole to the ankle. It is this ground that the lotus very lightly roots itself in and emerges from. The white root end fades into the green stalk which holds the leaf in a way that the whole appears as a single spear shooting out of the water and aiming for

the sky's center. The leaf, once exposed to the light and air, begins to separate itself from the line of the stem and take on its own character. Depending on when this urge arises, the leaf can end up in two places. One is resting on the surface of the river where it receives watery support and is subject to every wake and wave. Here, small silvery beads can quickly roll across it like mercury without leaving any moisture behind on the surface. The leaf can also fully take to the air, supporting itself in the midst of calm and gusty winds. Either way, the lotus leaf begins to tilt and show expansion as air fills out its tight rolls. As it unrolls, it takes on the look of a double scroll being opened at both ends or of a pair of binoculars. When completely

unrolled, the leaf finishes its transition from aiming for the sky's center to aiming at every point along the horizon with its roundness. If resting on the water, it lays out flat and shows its radiating veins like several trickles of water emerging from a spot on the ground and going in every direction. If resting in the air the leaf shows more of its own strength taking on a sort of fountain shape. We can follow this shape in the veins of the leaf as they arise singularly in several directions out of the central stem and carry the leaf up at an angle away from the water as water spurting from a fount. When these veins begin to branch at a little over half way between the center and the edge of the leaf, the leaf itself angles back down, as falling water, towards the river. So the leaf stands, or floats, and the time has come for the bud to show itself.

On a separate stalk, close to the leaf, an egg shaped, green bud appears with two sepals on each side. The bud wells up as more sepals are pulled out of the top, leaving the original two at the bottom of a complex swirl of sepal/petal points. From above, this appears as a sort of vortex which could trace out the path of some wandering planet over the existence of the bud. One could imagine the outer points referring to the past and then swirling from the two original sepals into the more present center. In this swirl, a transformation is traced out from the outer green sepals to inner near-petals which are whiter. Fully white petals finally show in the gush of the opening bud that gives a cup shape and exposes the yellow pistil to the air. At first, the top of the pale yellow pistil is exposed showing many glistening yellow stigmas which form two concentric circles with one or two individuals in the center. The petals more and more fall back from the pistil then and expose its full shape as a sort of inverted cone. After pollination, as the stigmas begin to darken and the petals fall back until they trickle down to the river, the pistil expands towards a full fruit and shades toward green. The fruit takes on a rippled wall as the seeds within grow larger. As expansion continues large holes replace the once small glistening stigmas and the fruit dries out leaving us with a brown pod which holds the seeds for new generation.

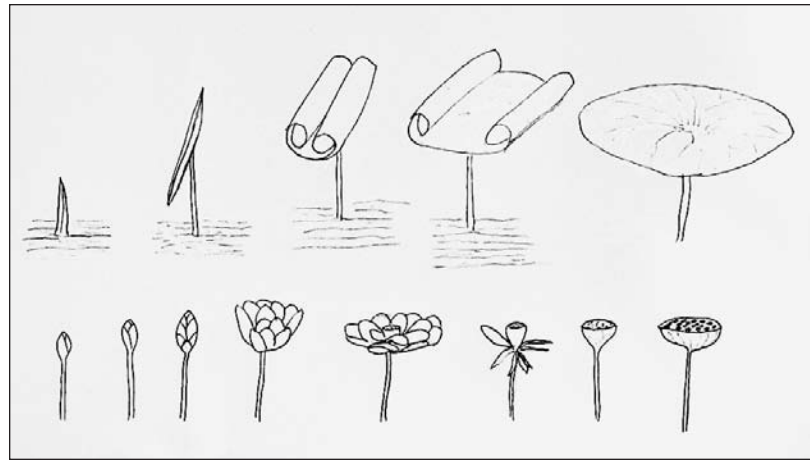
You are Invited To a Retain the Rain Workshop

A Retain the Rain workshop on permeable paving that reduces stormwater runoff will be held October 3, 2007 at the LeClaire Levee parking lot, 100 South Front Street, LeClaire, Iowa. It is open to the general public and will feature Wayne Peterson, Urban Resources Conservationist, NRCS, Iowa City, IA; Rob Wolfe, RJ Wolfe and Sons, contractor on the project; and River Action, Retain the Rain sponsor.

The solution to reducing the Quad Cities' stormwater runoff, and thus lowering flood levels and improving the quality of water in rivers and streams, lies in increasing the permeability of home, business, and industrial properties. One of the best ways to achieve this is by designing and installing simple, cost-effective projects like permeable parking lots.

Quad City communities are assessing stormwater utility fees based on the amount of impervious surfaces on properties, and three cities offer monetary credits for projects that reduce runoff. It will be increasingly advantageous for residents and professionals to know about the range of available projects that retain the rain and how to install them.

The workshop is free. Please register by calling River Action at (563) 322-2969 or e-mail riveraction.org before October 1, 2007, to assure receiving an information packet.



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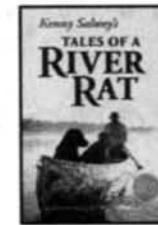
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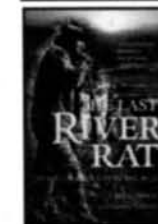
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