

LILY (LILIUM) CARE SHEET

Every garden benefits from the addition of these most versatile and beautiful plants. Equally at ease in containers or in the ground, the choices are wide. Lilies fit in well with other garden plantings because their growth is so upright. They take up very little space and can grow between other plants.

The three main divisions of lilies are the Asiatics, the Trumpets, and the Orientals. There are actually nine divisions with more being created to account for the inter-division hybrids. Each of these divisions has sub-groups for the differences in flower shape and direction.

Asiatic lilies are the easiest and most tolerant of the lily cultivars. They are available in the broadest range of colours and are distinguished by their lack of fragrance. They are the first of the lilies to bloom.

Ht: 2-4' (60-120cm). Bloom time in June and July.

Trumpet lilies are very tall and very fragrant. These may require staking and are best planted near the back of the border.

The colour range is not as varied as with the Asiatics, but the blooms are large and trumpet shaped, often with contrasting colours inside and out and the leaves are generally very thin.

Ht: 4-6' (120-180cm) Bloom time in July.

Oriental lilies are large, flashy and very fragrant; they are often used as a cut flower. Flower colours are shades of white, pink or red and they are generally broad. They do require an acidic soil and if your soil is too alkaline, it might be best to grow these in a container.

Ht: 3-6' (90-180cm). Bloom time in August to September.

Martagon lilies are a unique type with attractive, whorled leaves and clusters of small, fragrant flowers. Very attractive, and able to withstand more shade than other lilies, they make an excellent addition to the woodland garden. It may take several years from seed to flower. Ht: 3.5-6.5' (1-2m). Early blooming. Very limited availability due to its slow growth, but highly valued.

Lilies do best in full sun but some will tolerate light shade. If too shaded, the plants will lean sharply towards the light. They must be planted in deep, loose, well-drained soil, have access to moisture at all times, and their roots must be kept shaded and cool. Unlike most bulbs, lily bulbs never go dormant and should never be allowed to dry out.

The necessity of well-drained soil cannot be overemphasized. Heavy, clay soils should be amended with compost and gritty gravel. Sandy soils also benefit from the addition of compost and premoistened peat moss. Mulch with well-rotted compost or shredded bark to maintain moisture and keep the soil cool. This will eventually break down and improve the soil structure. Plant lilies deeply in sandy soils and less so in clay soils.

General rule: Cover small bulbs with a minimum of 2-3" of soil, medium bulbs with 3-4" of soil and large bulbs with 4-6" of soil.

After blooming, remove the dead flower, leaving all foliage intact. This is also an essential step when cutting lilies to bring indoors. As much foliage as possible must be left on the plant in the ground. Cutting long stems will seriously weaken the lily. Allow the stem and leaves to turn completely brown at the end of the season before cutting back to the ground. This allows the lily to regenerate for the following year's blooms. Cover the small hole made, after cutting, with some soil. This prevents water from entering and potentially rotting the bulb.

This is the best time to divide and/or move your lilies. They can be dug out, (never pulled), and carefully graded for size. New lily bulbs will have formed around the stem of the mother plant or around the original bulb. These can all be planted out separately in the garden to size up for future blooms.

No bulb is easier to grow in a container than the lily. The larger the pot, the more room there will be for root development and the more stable the pot will be for tall growing lilies. You can maximize the growing possibilities by under-planting with lilies and planting other annuals or perennials on top of them. These plants add interest and contrast while keeping the lily roots cool. Try growing some pansies or lamium as groundcover on top of the container. Over-winter the pots in an unheated shed or garage or plant directly into the garden.

PESTS AND DISEASES:

Strong, healthy plants are your best defense against pests and diseases. By giving your lilies the best possible care, your chances of attack are slimmer.

Be on the lookout for the bright red lily beetle. If seen, it must be hunted out and destroyed. Both the beetle and their larvae hide in what looks like black tar or bird droppings on the leaves. This can eventually kill the plant. Removing by hand, if possible, is fine. Just be sure to place a container under the leaf so that the beetle does not drop to the ground.

Symptoms of virus on lilies appear as distorted leaves, buds or flowers. Most evident is unusual streaking on flower petals or mottled foliage. If affected, pull out and destroy the plant. Do not compost.

Some animals, like rabbits, like to eat the lilies just as they are emerging from the ground. Caging your plants may be necessary, if this is a frequent occurrence. Once the tips are eaten, they will not bloom.