

Make room for hardy lilies in your flower border and you'll have glorious color all summer. By selecting varieties according to when they flower, you can have a progression of bloom from June to September.

There are hardy lilies to fit any sunny spot in your garden. Check out tall or short ones, with solid or blended flower colors. All varieties need sunlight, preferably until about 2 p.m.

The most important consideration in selecting a spot for lilies is drainage: lilies won't tolerate soggy conditions. Planting on a gentle slope is ideal. If your chosen site is level, plant in hills or raised beds for best results.

Set out madonna lilies (*Lilium candidum*) or nankeen lilies (*L. x testaceum*) in late August or early September. All other hardy lilies go in a month or so later.

Except for the madonnas and the Turk's-cap lilies (*L. martagon*), bulbs should be planted about eight inches deep, measuring from the base of the lily bulb. Madonnas are planted one inch below surface and should put up top growth before frost if they are to bloom the following season. Plant Turk's-cap lilies about two inches deep.

Plant all the hardy lilies soon after they arrive, because they are never truly dormant. Add a handful of bone meal to the bottom of each bulb hole and a two- to three-inch layer of straw as mulch over the top.

Cutting individual lilies to float in bowls won't harm next year's bulb strength, but don't cut long stems of many in your border. Lilies need stems and leaves to build up strength for next year's blooms.

Color combinations

Design a color scheme for your plantings to gain the most dramatic effect. Orange and yellow lilies complement each other. They increase abundantly and flower with the Japanese iris. Lilies and iris are compatible, because both need rich, well-drained soil.

Ranging from two to six feet tall, lilies' delicate stems may need to be tied to stakes for support, even in protected areas.

Thin green bamboo stakes will be cleverly disguised when lilies are grown in front of evergreen shrubs, hedges, or trees. Plant at least three bulbs in a group.

Care and feeding

Hardy lilies bloom for years with few disease control or care problems so long as they're planted in sunny, well drained spots. Each hybrid bulb produces eight to a dozen flowers up to eight inches across on a lofty six-foot stem. Remove blooms as soon as they start to turn brown or seedpods will develop fully.

Flowering in August, hardy lilies can be lifted when the leaves turn yellow. Although you can move them in the spring, fall is better; there's less danger of harming new shoots or roots at that season.

Lilies appreciate a feeding of bone meal once or twice a year. Carefully work it into the soil around the plants.