



B&D Lilies™ - Since 1978

Lily Bulb Quick Cultural Guide



FIRST - Choose sun or dappled shade

Lily bulbs need full sun or at least 6 hours of sun or bright indirect light to grow well in most areas. Midwest; and dry California interior/Southern States, provide afternoon shade in the hotter climates to prolong bloom. Short growing seasons, such as in Alaska or High Desert/Mountainous areas, plant in full sun to allow enough time for the foliage to mature before winter.

Check air circulation & soil Composition

Choose open, full sun to part shade areas and well drained soils, making a raised bed if your soil dries slowly. Avoid closely overhanging branches and automatic sprinkler systems, as air flow and high humidity contribute to brown-colored fungus spots on leaves and buds (*Botrytis*).

Review companion plants

Nutrient-robbing tree or shrub roots and aggressive perennials/ground covers will stunt your bulb's growth, so choose shallow rooted perennials or ones that tend to make a taproot, rather than spread quickly. Favorites are *Campanula*, (Bellflower - choose noninvasive forms), Primroses, *Aquilegia* (Columbine), *Aconitum* (Monkshood), *Geraniaceae* (Cranesbill - perennial forms), *Heuchera* (Coral Bells), Herbaceous Peonies, Perennial/annual Poppies plus the heat-resistant Delphiniums.

Prepare I.D. Labels

Small plastic labels, with name and current date, written in pencil, and buried underground with bulbs will last for years and provide an additional record.

Place bulbs 8 - 12 inches apart in garden

Asiatics: about 4 - 6 inches of soil covering bulbs

Trumpets, Orientals, Orientpets (OTs): usually 6 - 8 inches over bulbs

Lilium Species: plant according to size, smaller more shallow

Water, even if raining

Water to firm the soil and remove any air pockets, even if rain is in the forecast. If you forget to water, your bulb roots will not have firm contact with soil and nutrients and could be damaged if fall-planted.

Mulch & Fertilizer

Cover newly planted bed with 1 to 2 inches of porous material to control weeds. When sprouts have emerged, sprinkle one tablespoon of low nitrogen, complete fertilizer around each sprout (i. e. 5-10-10), then again just before buds open.

Fall Cleanup

Cut stems down when leaves turn from green to yellow and discard in trash. Do not compost stems, especially if you had *Botrytis* fungus, characterized by brown spots that disfigure the blooms. If desired, top with an inch of compost. **Mulch well** for winter, after the soil freezes in the Midwest (Zones 3 - 6) or in areas where temperatures drop below zero and no snow cover is expected. Milder areas, such as Zones 7 - 9 only require an inch or so of mulch to control winter growing weeds.

Soil Types in the Garden

Clay soil is described in various ways as adobe, gumbo, or "heavy" and is composed of small mineral particles which are generally flat in shape and form a close bond with one another. Water and air have difficulty passing through these tightly bonded particles. In clay, oxygen is not supplied as readily to the roots, and bulbs will suffocate and rot if given too much moisture. Add sand or perlite, along with a small measure of compost or manure to lighten the soil mixture and prevent oversaturated soil during rainy seasons. If you are unsure as to whether you have clay soil, dig a hole one foot deep, fill with water, and wait. In areas of low rainfall, if water drains away within one hour, drainage is generally sufficient for lily bulbs, however plants needing better drainage, such as *Eucomis* or tropical bulbs (in appropriate climates) it may still be marginal. If water passes sluggishly, consider a raised bed.

Sandy soil never "puddles," with particles generally more rounded in shape and does not stick together when moistened. Sandy soil allows air and water to pass freely, but usually needs to be amended with a sensible amount of materials such as compost, plus it needs to be fertilized more frequently.

Loam (a gardener's dream) is a mixture of clay, sand, and organic materials which are fast-draining and naturally fluffy, allowing soil to stay slightly moist but not soggy between watering cycles. Regular mulching with a variety of materials will encourage earthworm activity and improve marginal soil to become "loam" over time.

Containerized Lily Bulbs

When potting lily bulbs use one gallon of potting soil per mature bulb into a container with ample drainage holes and at least 8 inches deep. Lily bulbs make stem roots above the bulb, which are "feeder" roots and are grown new each season; the basal plate roots on the bulb bottom acts primarily as a counterweight to keep wind from toppling the stem, therefore the stem roots are the most important immediate concern. In containers that are barely 8 inches deep, place bulbs almost on the bottom, so there will be at least 6 inches of soil covering the lilies, any less room and stem roots will not be able to form properly, which will severely limit the growth potential of your lily bulbs.

Large fiberglass/molded plastic pots, especially of double-wall construction are preferred, the larger soil mass acts as insulation during both winter cold and summer heat, plus there is room to plant trailing annuals to drape over the sides and soften the lines.

Premoisten potting soil before filling your container. Place bulbs, pointed top up, roots down, about 4 to 5 inches apart; any closer and you'll need to divide more than every two to three years. Put a small plastic label next to the bulb for future reference should the top label fade or be lost and cover bulbs completely, lightly firming soil. Water just until you see moisture streaming out of the drainage holes and if needed, top off with fresh soil, leaving about two inches between soil and the top rim of the container. Add a label topside for easy reference and do not water again until the potting soil is dry two inches below the surface. Lily bulbs by their very nature are designed to store moisture in the fleshy scales that make up the bulb; they do not swim well, so if you allow their soil to stay constantly wet, the bulbs most likely will rot.

When sprouts begin emerging, sprinkle about one tablespoon of balanced granular fertilizer around, but not touching sprouts. Water pots as normal, repeating the fertilizer when the flowers are budded and just beginning to open. We like 5-10-10 or similar formulas, but you can also use a time release mixed into the top two inches of soil. This simple twice-a-year feeding will keep your lilies in prime shape for up to three years before bulbs need to be divided in autumn or winter.

Containerized lily bulbs must be protected from excessive moisture and/or "freeze-thaw" cycles during winter or bulbs will rot. Successful strategies over winter include moving containers under decking, beneath a roof overhang, into an unheated greenhouse, cold frame or into a cool garage for winter. Soil in containers should stay *slightly* damp, but not be soggy, move into a protected area outdoors when sprouts begin to emerge.

Do not lift bulbs to store bare over winter, we use humidity controlled coolers and damp peat to store bulbs indoors, gradually dropping the temperature to mimic nature until just the peat is frozen. Lily bulbs are happiest left in the garden or stored undisturbed in pots.

Commercial Potting Soils

No matter how well drained your garden soil is for lilies or other bulbs, we recommend that you choose a quality grade of purchased potting soil for weed-free growing in pots. Our choice is always a soil labeled as "commercial", as this generally will have perlite (*the white crunchy stuff*), peat, compost and perhaps a "sticker-spreader" included to allow soil to take up moisture quickly. Avoid brands that have fertilizer already added; mostly it will be nitrogen in excessive rates for bulbs, tomatoes or other flowering plants resulting in nice green leaves, but at the expense of flowers. Try to see an example of the potting soil; look for large pieces of non-composted wood, if the soil smells like rotting wood and the label simply says "wood products" avoid that brand. Rotting wood uses up nitrogen in the soil, but the nitrogen added to those mixes to compensate for this phenomenon will also result in the lilies greedily taking up the fertilizer resulting in uncontrolled overfeeding and weakened soft tissue.

Thank you for the opportunity to help beautify your garden.

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