

BRECK'S.  
*Lily Lovers*

**LILY PLANTING HANDBOOK**

*Simple Steps to Ensure a Lifetime of Beauty*



# BRECK'S LILY PLANTING HANDBOOK

## WHEN YOU RECEIVE YOUR FIELD-GROWN LILY BULBS

Your lilies are shipped as dry bulbs. The bulbs are field-grown and have been harvested recently. Unlike tulips and daffodils, lily bulbs do not have a protective covering. For this reason, plant lilies as soon as possible after they arrive at your home. If you don't have time to plant immediately, keep the lilies in their original bags at about 40°F (5°C) for no longer than three weeks (the vegetable drawer of a refrigerator is ideal). Quick planting, however, will give the best results.

Don't worry if your bulbs have developed a sprout. Plant the bulbs as soon as possible and be careful not to break the sprout.

A little blue mold on the outer scales is normal and no cause for worry. Lily bulbs have a high sugar content. Harvesting and handling the bulbs may have caused small injuries on which blue mold can develop. This is harmless.



Lily bulb

## SITE SELECTION - WHERE TO PLANT YOUR LILIES

Choose a site with the following characteristics:

- Full sun to partial shade (for instance, morning sun and afternoon shade, or

dappled sun throughout the day). For best results, lilies need 6–8 hours of direct sunlight a day. If it's too shady, the stems will get spindly and fall over.

- Well-drained soils. Avoid soils that become waterlogged from time to time. Lilies tolerate a wide variety of soil types, from clay to sand.
- Lilies are tolerant of a wide range of pH but prefer neutral to slightly acidic soils.

## PREPARING THE SITE/WORKING THE SOIL

As lilies are excellent for perennializing, they prefer to be left undisturbed for years. It is worth taking the time to dig a proper hole and amend the soil.

Spade or rototill the soil to a depth of 12–15". Mix in a generous 2–4" layer of dehydrated manure, garden compost and Breck's Food for Bulbs and Perennials. If your soil is already rich garden loam and well-drained, the addition of Breck's Food for Bulbs and Perennials will provide the ideal conditions recommended by Breck's Dutch bulb experts for superior growth and blooming. If you have a clay soil you may need to amend for drainage. A good solution is to mix compost and rock dust or crushed stone into your soil. If you have sandy soil, amend with compost and possibly clay to increase the retention of nutrients. This will also help to better retain moisture.

## PLANTING

After you have loosened and improved the soil as described above, dig a hole about 6–9" deep and place the bulb at the bottom with its roots facing down. Cover the bulb with earth, press down gently and water thoroughly. The recommended spacing for each variety is mentioned on the bags in which the bulbs are shipped.

Plant bulbs somewhat deeper in climates with warmer summers and somewhat

shallower in climates with cooler summers. Deep planting keeps lily bulbs cool when temperatures soar. Deeper planting also encourages the developing stem to send out roots to help stabilize the plant.

## MULCHING/WINTER PROTECTION

A year-round mulch of compost, leaf mold, leaves or commercial types of mulch has a positive effect on your lilies by keeping the soil from drying out, maintaining a more even and cooler soil temperature, providing organic matter for an optimal structure of the soil and reducing weed growth. A 2–4" layer of mulch is ideal. This will also help to prevent bulbs from being heaved out of the ground by alternate freezing and thawing weather.

## CONTINUING CARE

Lilies like a rich soil. A surface application of Breck's Food for Bulbs and Perennials is recommended each spring just as the lily sprouts begin to emerge and again when the flowers are opening during the summer. Lilies planted in areas of high rainfall or in sandy soil will require more feeding than lilies planted in a rich, clay soil.

If natural rainfall is less than about 1" per week, additional watering is recommended.

After flowering you can remove the spent flowers. This will prevent the forming of seed pods, which takes away energy from the bulb. The more energy the bulb has, the more flowers you will have next year. It is very important NOT to remove the foliage until it has turned yellow. The foliage is needed for the bulb to build energy for next year. See our topic 'For cut flowers' below if you want to pick flowers for bouquets.

## LILIES IN CONTAINERS

Almost all lilies grow well in containers, although taller types may require

some sort of support. It is best to use somewhat larger containers (10 gallons or larger). The bigger the pot the better. Containers also need enough depth, at least 12" is recommended.

Commercial potting mixes are available. Look for those with extra porosity. Place a 2" layer of drainage material, such as rocks or small stones, in the base of clay pots before beginning to fill with potting compost.

We advise planting lilies in a container closer together than in the garden. This will give a nicer effect. Allow about 2" between bulbs in a container. In a container, lilies can be planted less deep than recommended for lilies planted in the garden. Plant at a depth equal to the height of the bulb to roughly two-and-a-half times the height of the bulb.

Containers will need to remain outside in the winter as lilies need the cold season to flower; however, in areas with severe frost move the pot indoors into a cool place. Place the pot outside again when temperatures rise. Be sure that your pots have drainage holes so that the pots do not fill with water as this will cause lilies to rot. Lilies are especially susceptible in winter when lack of significant drainage will cause the pots to freeze and fill with ice.

Repot in the fall when the foliage dies down, or transfer bulbs to the garden. In larger containers, lilies can be grown on for a second season in the same pot, but ensure that the top 2" of compost is replaced with fresh compost with some added fertilizer or well-rotted manure.

## FOR CUT FLOWERS

All lilies make excellent cut flowers. Pick flowers as the buds are just beginning to open. When the flowers are fully open, you can remove the orange pollen-coated stamens to avoid staining the blooms, clothes or furniture. Double flowering lilies and other new cultivars do not have any pollen, thus avoiding this problem.

When cutting, leave at least one third of the stem on the plant to help the bulb gather strength for the next year. If too much of the stem with foliage is removed, the bulb may not flower the following year.

When placing the lilies in a vase, ensure there are no leaves in the water to foul it. Leave the upper leaves on the stem as they will provide nutrients for the unopened flower buds. The flowers will last longer when the vase is kept out of direct sunlight. Change the water regularly, ideally each day. A drop of bleach will help to keep the water clean. Depending on the variety, blooms will last from 7–14 days in a vase.

## DISEASES AND PESTS

Normally, most lilies are very easy to grow and take very little care. Some problems that may occur are:

**Lily Beetle** – The lily beetle (*Lilioceris lili*) has been reported in eastern North America. The larvae and adult beetles feed on the leaves of lilies. Both life stages have voracious appetites and soon devour entire plants. The eggs are laid on the underside of the foliage. Catch the vibrant orange-red adult beetles between the fingers and dispose of them.

**Botrytis** – Botrytis is a fungus disease that affects the leaves of lilies. It was caused by excessive moisture and warm temperatures. The first signs can be white spots on the leaves. The disease is not carried by the bulb so it will not affect flowering the following year. Remove noticeable spotted leaves. Spraying can be done. A copper spray can be used, or natural remedies such as a baking soda mixture (1/4 tsp. per quart of water) sprayed weekly on the foliage during wet periods can also be used.

Good air circulation will help prevent an outbreak. In the fall clean up dead stems and leaves.

**Basal Rot** – Basal rot is a fungus that invades the bulb through the roots and basal plate. The symptoms on the growing plants are usually a streaky yellowing of the foliage. The disease can become present in warm, moist soils. As a preventive, avoid overwatering during warm summer months and provide good drainage. As for infected bulbs, remove the infected scales and dip the bulbs in a fungicide solution, which is readily available to home growers.