

LILY BASICS Part 1

Taxonomy

There are a few plants that every prairie garden should include – peonies, clematis, lilacs, roses – and lilies. Lilies are one of the true garden stars offering tremendous value with little effort. Lilies are hardy in our climate (with a few exceptions) and easy to grow. They take up a small amount of real-estate in the garden, but provide fabulous colour and create a strong impact.

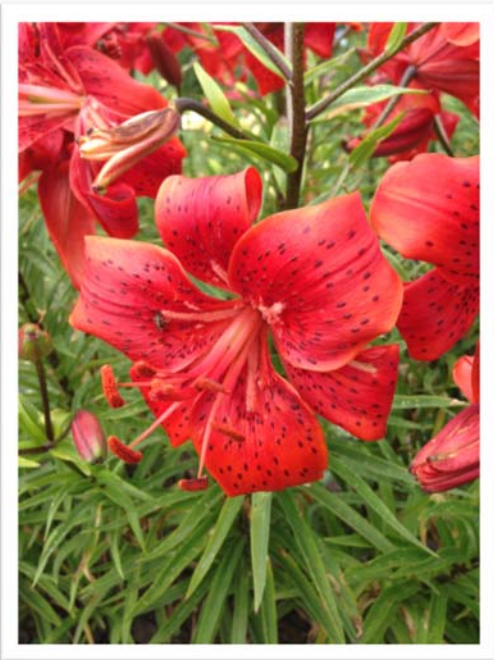
Lilies offer incredible diversity of flowers with variation in bloom size, shape, arrangement, number and colour. Gardeners can choose from a wide range of bloom times and plant heights. The versatility and variety that lilies bring to the garden means there is a lily for virtually any situation. And with a bit of basic knowledge, anyone can be successful growing them.



Lily collection at Olds College

Taxonomy

The term 'lily' is used very loosely in gardening circles. You may be familiar with plants such as lily of the valley, day lilies, or calla lilies, and you would be forgiven for thinking that these were the same as or similar to true lilies (which are the focus of this series of articles). But in fact, although they share some common features, they are all very different plants. This is a great example of the confusion that can arise when relying on common plant names rather than delving into what can often seem the confusing world of scientific (Latin) plant names.



Calgary Tower

Common plant names can vary from country to country, even from one region to another. Different cultures may use different common names for the same plant. This can make it difficult to be confident that two people are talking about the same plant. To make matters more confusing, one plant may have several common names. For example, the Alberta native plant *Geum triflorum* has several common names: old man's whiskers, prairie

smoke, three-flowered avens, and purple avens. If you search on the internet for old man's whiskers, you may find information on *Tillandsia usneoides*, also known by the common name of Spanish moss.

For our purposes when we use the term 'lily' we are shining the spotlight on true lilies which are found in the genus *Lilium* in the Lily Family (Liliaceae). Other genera in this family include *Tulipa* (tulips), *Erythronium* (fawnlily), and *Fritillaria* (mission bells, fritillary) to name just a few. By contrast, lily of the valley is in the *Convallaria* genus in the Asparagus Family (Asparagaceae) and day lilies are in the *Hemerocallis* genus in the Aloe Family (Xanthorrhoeaceae).

Lilies are considered herbaceous perennial plants because their life cycle continues for more than one year, and all their above-ground growth dies back at the end of each season and re-emerges each spring.

Flowering plants are divided into two main categories – Monocots and Dicots. Lilies are Monocots, characterized by parallel leaf veins, flower parts (petals, sepals, pistils etc.) in groups of 3's, fibrous root systems, and a single seed leaf emerging after germination. Other familiar many others. Dicots by contrast 5's, taproot systems, netted leaf many familiar garden plants such as and shrubs.

Stay tuned for the next installment lily.

Written by Jane Reksten, Manager, College, (www.oldscollege.ca) and the lilies.org)



Monocots are grasses, onions, tulips and have flowers parts in groups of 4's and veins and two seed leaves. Dicots include geraniums, delphiniums, as well as trees

to learn more about the anatomy of a

Botanic Gardens and Greenhouses at Olds Alberta Regional Lily Society (www.arls-

