hybrid lily

Photo: The Sun Valley Group

Lilium x *hybrida* 'Dazzle'
Asiatic hybrid lily

BOTANICAL NAME

Lilium x *hybrida*
(LIL-ee-um HIGH-bri-duh)

COMMON NAMES

- Asiatic hybrid lily (formerly called Mid-Century hybrids)
- Oriental hybrid lily
- LA (*longiflorum*/Asiatic) hybrid lily
- LO (*longiflorum*/Oriental) hybrid lily
- OT (Oriental/trumpet) hybrid lily

DESCRIPTION

Depending on the type of hybrid, lilies' six-petaled blooms flare open, ranging from about 4 inches (Asiatic) to 8 inches (Oriental) in diameter. The blooms, which typically number from three to 12 per stem, can be upward facing to nodding, and the petals can be strongly recurved. Radiating from the core of the blooms are the stamens, which consist of the stemlike filaments that support the pollen-bearing anthers.

Hybrid lily stems, which range in length from about 20 to 40 inches, have spirally arranged or whorled leaves that vary from narrow and grasslike to short and broad.

Many Oriental, OT and LO hybrid varieties are fragrant, with some hybrid types and cultivars being stronger than others. Asiatic and LA hybrids generally have slight or no fragrance.

COLORS

Hybrid lilies are available in solid colors (with or without speckles) and bicolors (speckled, striped and/or splashed). The color range includes pinks, reds and burgundies; oranges, from red-orange and rust to peach/apricot and salmon/coral; yellows, from pastel to bright; and whites/ivories/creams/tans.

VASE LIFE

Four to 11 days is the typical vase life for a stem of cut lilies, depending on the type of hybrid, variety and care. Individual blooms generally last from two to four days each.

AVAILABILITY

Asiatic, Oriental, LA and OT hybrid lilies are available year-round from both domestic and international growers. LO hybrids are the newest lilies and are currently in limited production, which makes their availability limited, as well.

vase-life extenders

PROCESSING Unpack lilies immediately upon their arrival, and check flower quality. Remove all sleeves and stem bindings as well as any foliage from the stems that would be under water in storage containers.

Next, recut stem ends with a sharp blade, removing at least 1 inch of stem. Immediately after cutting, dip or place stem ends into a hydration solution to help the flowers absorb water more quickly and easily. Then place them into containers half filled with properly proportioned *bulb-flower-food* solution made with cool or lukewarm nonfluoridated water (some varieties are sensitive to fluoride, which most tap water contains).

REFRIGERATION After processing, place lilies into a floral cooler at 33 F to 36 F, and allow them to hydrate for at least two hours before using or selling them. Some types and varieties of hybrid lilies can begin opening almost immediately after being placed into bulb-flower-food solution, but refrigeration will slow that process.

ETHYLENE SENSITIVITY Hybrid lilies are sensitive to ethylene gas although the degree varies by hybrid type and varieties. Asiatic hybrids are the most sensitive. Exposure to ethylene causes petal and/or leaf drop, bud drop or withering, and leaf yellowing.

Make sure your purchases, especially Asiatic hybrids, are treated with an ethylene inhibitor at the grower level or during shipping. In addition, keep them away from sources of ethylene such as ripening fruit, decaying flowers and foliage, automobile exhaust, and tobacco smoke.

CONSUMER ACTION Instruct customers to recut the stems and to change the vase solution every other day using the bulb-flower nutrient you provide. Also advise them to remove blooms as they fade and leaves as they yellow, to keep their flowers out of direct sunlight and warm drafts, and to carefully remove anthers as soon as blooms open.

challenges

POLLEN STAINS Lily pollen will stain anything it touches, so remove all anthers immediately after each bloom opens, and advise customers to do the same. Contrary to a popular myth, removing anthers does *not* shorten lilies' vase life. Some pollen-free varieties have been introduced in recent years.

If pollen gets on fabric, brush it away lightly and gently with a soft brush, piece of tissue or chenille stem. Do not wet the fabric or touch the stain with your hands. If any pollen color remains, place the fabric outside in the sunshine until the stain disappears.

HORMONE IMBALANCES Hybrid lilies experience hormone imbalances when they are cut from their bulbs. These imbalances cause premature leaf yellowing, buds to fail to open, loss of color vibrancy and reduced vase lives.

Bulb-flower foods contain naturally

occurring plant hormones (or *plant growth regulators*), and they have a lower concentration of sugar than standard flower foods, which can aggravate leaf yellowing. Ideally, bulb-flower-food solutions should be prepared with nonfluoridated water. *(For additional information on leaf yellowing and hormone imbalances, see below and "Purchasing Tips," No. 2.)*

LEAF YELLOWING In addition to hormone imbalances, leaf yellowing can result from a too high concentration of sugar in flower-food solution (more than 3 percent), exposure to ethylene, too low storage temperatures and/or poor growing conditions.

PREMATURE FLOWER BUD DEATH Causes include exposure to ethylene, refrigeration at too low temperatures and/or cold storage for too many days.

PETAL, BUD AND/OR LEAF DROP The most common cause is exposure to ethylene.

Photo: The Sun Valley Group

Lilium x *hybrida* 'Shocking'
OT (Oriental/trumpet) hybrid lily

Photo: Mak Breeding BV

Lilium x *hybrida* 'Tabledance'
OT (Oriental/trumpet) hybrid lily

Photo: The Sun Valley Group

Lilium x *hybrida* 'Starfighter'
Oriental hybrid lily

Photo: The Sun Valley Group

Lilium x *hybrida* 'Sunset'
LA (*longiflorum*/Asiatic) hybrid lily

Photo: De Jong Lelies Holland BV

Lilium x *hybrida* 'Party Diamond'
LA (*longiflorum*/Asiatic) hybrid lily

Photo: Royal Van Zanten

Lilium x *hybrida* 'Laguna'
Oriental hybrid lily

purchasing tips

- Choose lilies that have at least one or two fully developed and colored—but unopened—buds per stem. Avoid bunches with a number of open blooms.
- Make sure the lilies you purchase are treated with an anti-leaf-yellowing treatment developed specifically for lilies (e.g., Chrysal RVB, Floralife® PAL) at the grower or wholesaler levels—in addition to being treated with an ethylene inhibitor *(see "Vase Life Extenders: Ethylene Sensitivity" on Page 18).*
- Check flower buds, stems and leaves for bruising, browning, yellowing, mold and rot.

fun facts

FAMILY MATTERS Hybrid lilies are members of the *Liliaceae* (lily) family and are related to lilies-of-the-valley, daylilies, *Fritillarias*, *Gloriosas*, hyacinths, stars-of-Bethlehem and tulips, among others.

HOME SWEET HOME The lilies from which these hybrids are derived are native to Japan and China. **sfr**

Some information provided by:
Botanica, *by R.G. Turner Jr. and Ernie Wasson*
Chain of Life Network®, www.chainoflife.org
Dictionary of Plant Names, *by Allen J. Coombes*
Hortus Third
by Liberty Hyde Bailey and Ethel Zoe Bailey
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