



Lily (*Lilium* spp.)



Origins

A member of the Liliaceae family, lilies are fragrant, bulbous, herbaceous perennials that are native to the northern temperate zones. About half of the lily species originate in continental Asia, while the remainder are native to Europe, North America and Japan. In ancient times, many cultures considered lilies to be signs of fertility and a pure life, and the flowers were used as offerings to appease the gods.

There are four main lily categories: longiflorum, Asiatic, Oriental and longiflorum x Asiatic. Longiflorums have a strong, sweet fragrance and feature large, funnel-shaped flowers that are usually white. Asiatic hybrids have smaller flowers and are less fragrant, but they're available in a wide variety of cultivars and colors. Oriental hybrids are available in fewer colors, but they have larger flowers and stronger fragrances than the Asiatics. Cultivated by crossing longiflorums with Asiatic lilies, the longiflorum x Asiatic category includes mostly apricot- or salmon-colored varieties that exude a light fragrance.

Availability and Vase Life

Most lily varieties are available year-round. It's best to buy lilies when a few of their lower buds have slightly opened and show some color. When properly processed and treated for ethylene sensitivity, cut lilies have a potential vase life of 7-14 days.

Care and Handling

Cut stems under water and remove lower foliage that will fall below the water line. To avoid difficult stains, remove pollen-bearing anthers before use.

Design Uses

Lilies are strong form flowers with equally strong lines, so even a few stems in a vase make a dramatic statement, and their look can range from country to English garden to avant-garde.



Information courtesy of Extra Touch Florist Association, www.etfassociation.org
Images courtesy of Colombia Flower Council, California Cut Flower Commission

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