

Canadian Prairie Lily Society Newsletter

December 2002

Number 100

New Lily Hybrid - University of Saskatchewan

Unique lily to mark U of S's 100th year: A one- of a kind centenary gift to the university could see the campus awash with lilies by 2007 - lilies that not only bear the institutions's name but also display its colours:gold, white and green.

Lilium University of Saskatchewan is a stately Asiatic lily recently registered with the Royal Horticultural Society of London, England. It is the creation of Donna Hay, a research technician in plant science's molecular genetics laboratory, who has worked since 1999 to breed just the right flower to mark the university's 100th anniversary in 2007.

The lily will be propagated using either scales taken from the bulbs, or tissue cultures and will eventually be

on sale to the public.

[Editor: This note was written by Tina Merrifield and first appeared in the Campus News column,The Star Phoenix, October 25, 2002. All lily growers will be looking forward to this new lily. I hope to be talking to Donna in the near future to get more information about her new introduction.]



Hybridizing at Home: From Fun to Fulfillment..... By.....Dr. Art Evans

Sometimes collecting, growing, and showing your lilies just is not enough. The day may come when your garden does not have room for one more lily, but your creative urges kick in and you say, "I want lilies that are newer than new. I want to create my own originals to suit my tastes." When I came to that point, a whole new world of enjoyment and fulfillment opened up in my somewhat small, untidy, country garden. Fortunately, many open-hearted and open-handed professionals and advance amateurs helped me reach higher and steer clear of some time wasting mistakes. Here are a few things I have learned from some fine human beings, some living and some sadly gone, from over the garden fence and over the Internet, a synergy that spawns epiphany

All of my hybridizing heroes would have agreed that to succeed you must focus on what you most want to accomplish, and do not take your eyes off the prize. I would love to grow some of everything, but I don't have the room, time, or strength. Possum Holler is a "fur piece" from the climate where most lilies thrive. It is zone 6 at the western edge of the Ozark hill country. The sorry clay soil, what there is of it, needs a lot of help and tends to build up soil-borne diseases. Late frosts are maddeningly destructive, and this predisposes damaged plants to botrytis in our wet spring weather. In June, the rain stops, and the Devil is right at home in our blazing hot, dry but humid summer. I call it Lily Hell.

Part I

My focus was on developing lilies which would thrive in the South. Having tried some of almost everything commercially available, the survivors gave me an idea of where to start. Unfortunately, few Orientals, my favourites, were survivors. The Aurelians, by contrast, are happy enough here in Lily Hell.

A visit with LeVern Freimann in 1987 convinced me

that the new Orientpet hybrids were the way to go. By combining Oriental bloom qualities with Aurelian heat and disease tolerance, I might have the best of both. LeVern had started in this direction with a foundation of 'Tetra Black Beauty' and 'Tetra Journey's End', both of which he converted using the mashed pulp of colchicum bulbs. His 'Scarlet Delight' came from this cross. Peter Schenk's 'Arabesque' has the same breeding. I set about to build on the possibilities they brought to light.

L. speciosum is the only source of heat tolerance and virus tolerance among the Oriental species, so it is no surprise that two of its older hybrids, 'Journey's End' and 'Allegra' are some of the few Oriental hybrids which persist here. Happily, a new more out-facing Oriental, 'Alma Ata', introduced by Johan Mak, also shows reasonable heat tolerance. Since I need these clones for breeding in a tetraploid Orientpet gene pool, I have sent them to Iribov, a company in The Netherlands which specializes in tissue culture and conversion of diploid lilies to tetraploids. At current prices of about \$300 US per clone, they convert it to tetraploid and multiply the conversion to about 50 bulblets. I do some conversions myself with oryzalin, but it is a slow and uncertain procedure requiring many scales. If you want to convert something rare or expensive, you need fast guaranteed results.

Part II

After setting your goal, spend some serious study time deciding what available breeding material might get your program on the right track. Here, reading will help, but learning everything you can from other, more advanced, addicts is one of the most enjoyable parts. If you are lucky, this phase can last the rest of your life. NALS is rich in experienced hybridizers who are easier to get started talking than they are to stop. Do not be shy. Just have the tape running, and pack a spare. You probably would not be able to write fast

enough.

Part III

When assembling potential breeding stock, do not hobble yourself by getting only one bulb of each clone. Unless something is very new and expensive, get at least three or more of each clone and at least a dozen of a strain or a species. If you have only one bulb of something important to your plan and a gopher eats it, you waste a year or more trying to replace it and make the crucial cross. Accidents and critters happen, so prepare for the worst. If you mature more good seed than you need, the NALS Seed Exchange would love to share it with our members. If you would rather keep it, freeze it in small airtight containers after it is well dried. The same goes for pollens. I freeze pollens of late blooming clones to use on early blooming types the following spring. When the stored variety blooms again, I toss the old and replace it with fresh. Make sure it is well dried before freezing pollen. Two or three days in an air-conditioned room is fine for most types, a day or two longer for bid tetraploid anthers. I pick anthers before they open so I'm sure they have not been contaminated with other pollens by critters. It saves more precious pollen, too.

I use the APC rule: Always Plant Chaff. You would be surprised how many chaffy, worthless looking seed actually germinate if they get a chance. The really surprising part is that these seedlings often appear just as strong as seedling from plumper seeds with visible embryos. Many articles carrying comments on this surprising finding have found their way into the Quarterly Bulletin over the last decade. Professional hybridizers have some very big advantages which speed their progress. From Ed McRae, I learned that one advantage is being able to raise a "**significant seedling population**" from any given cross. If you have at least 100 seedling to choose from in a cross, you have a good idea of what that cross can produce in quality and variation. If you have only 5 seedlings from a cross, did you flower the best ones possible from you cross? Maybe, but probably not. Do not waste 3 or 4 years repeating a cross because you did not flower enough seedlings to get the best out a cross the first time.

Part IV

Cull your seedlings ruthlessly! Shame on anyone who saves and breeds with a seedling which has a gorgeous

bloom, but has low vigor and low tolerance to the common diseases. It will help your project and your reputation immeasurably if you resist the temptation to breed with an attractive seedling in its first bloom season. Let it get full-size and demonstrate some admirable traits besides individual bloom quality before you devote the rest of your garden to this seedlings. Too often a flashy newcomer declines in year 2,3, and 4. You can cull faster by not spraying your seedlings. Mom and the aphids will show you pretty quickly which ones are prone to late frost damage, *botrytis*, *fusarium*, and virus.

Sometimes we do not have enough choices of healthy, virgorous breeders. I have used Asano's 82-111 (Auratum x *L. henryi*) which was potentially valuable as a bridging hybrid an in the Orienpet group, but is notoriously dominant in passing on virus susceptibility to most of its seedlings. I tried to use it with only very virus tolerant pod parents such as 'Journey's End' and persistent seedlings from my 'Tetra Black Beauty' hybrids. Still, most of the seedling showed virus symptoms within 3 years. Regardless of how pretty the bloom is, if it starts showing the blotchy, streaky, pale foliage typical of virus infection, the seedling is history.

Part V

If you think you have a winner, share a bulb with far flung friends who will tell you the truth about how the seedling performs for them under different conditions. We have a saying here in the South: "Every mother crow thinks her little ones are the blackest." I do, too, so I send seedlings to friends on both coasts, as well as the upper Midwest and Canada. Happily, the seedlings often do better closer to Lily Heaven (the flanks of Mt. Hood) than they do here in the Devil's Kitchen. Still I'm looking for seedings which thrive in the land of gumbo and grits as well as they do in the land of lutefisk and latte.

I have yet to solve the problem of how to get a proven winner seedling from the test garden to the mass market. If you want to compete in the mass garden market, you need a commercial grower and a wholesaler/retailer for promotion and distribution. Usually, the amateur hybridizer ends up trying to sell his seedling to a large bulb company for very little money in hope that the little darling will brighten the gardens of countless thousands. Usually, it doesn't. We often hear that there isn't much profit in garden-

type lilies, which is the reason most large companies are not interested in what we do. They would rather sell us their surplus forcing-type lilies as appropriate for gardens all across North America. We keep falling for it and blaming ourselves when they fail to perform well. What is wrong with this picture?

North American gardeners have discovered lilies, and they will pay good price for quality and diversity. They are becoming more sophisticated, however, wanting a dependable hardy perennial instead of an expensive annual. There are a lot of excellent new garden lilies in the back yards of amateur hybridizers. Who will step up to this opportunity with the know how and financial backing to bring North American gardeners really good garden-adapted lilies in the mass market venues where they already buy billions of dollars' worth of other plants and supplies!

Every June and July morning when the first bloom seedlings are opening, I bounce out of bed like I was on springs. What a thrill it is to see the new faces and know that they may make a real difference in the enjoyment of lilies for many fellow gardeners whose climate were too hostile for lilies of the past. If I could make a wish for the new year, it would be that all of you could enjoy the same feeling of fulfillment my making your own crosses and flowering your own

seedlings.

*[Editor's note: The article titled 'Hybridizing At Home: From Fun to Fulfillment' was written by Dr. Arthur Evans, Gravette, Arkansas, it first appeared in *The Lily Yearbook of The North American Lily Society, Inc, Number 53, 2000.*]*

Bees do it, we do it !!!!!.....



By.....Virginia Howie

President's Message.....

Did all of you find the time to finish your fall work before the snow fell? I find that I will be completing a lot of fall work in spring! I was working on several projects this fall, including renovating two perennial beds and replanting some martagon lilies. In the fall of 2001 I was able to work in my yard into the second week in November; and so was thinking with prairie gardener optimism that the same would be true for 2002. Was I ever wrong!

I think that even the trees were surprised by the early onset of cold, as most of the leaves didn't turn colour and are just now falling, not onto the grass but onto the snow. And the sorry plight of the lily bulbs that I purchased at the Fall Bulb Sale is that they will spend the winter in my fridge, rather than in the ground.

The lilies, trees and perennials may be asleep but the winter landscape is alive with the promise of next year's growth. Fat dormant buds are present on the trees and shrubs; the brilliant red of the coral dogwood stems (*Cornus alba* 'Sibirica'), and the deep brownish purple stems of the purple-twig dogwood (*Cornus alba* 'Kesselringii'), contrast strikingly with the white snow and lend their colour to the subdued winter tones.

Many thanks to all of the volunteers and organizers who worked at the Fall Bulb Sale this year. Special thanks once again to John Bond for his continued

dedication in organizing this event, to Margaret Driver for compiling the bulb list and ordering bulbs and to Bob Caldwell for organizing volunteers to work at the sale tables, this event is a success because of your efforts, which are very much appreciated.

On a sad note, we have lost members and supporters of our Society this fall. On behalf of the CPLS I extend our deepest sympathy to our Bulb Sale Chairperson, John Bond on the passing of his dear wife Betty. Our heartfelt sympathy is extended also to the families of Pat Adams of Saskatoon and Shirley McKercher of the Saskatoon area. I have many fond memories of Shirley's kindness and sense of humour. We will miss her wonderful talent for design which was evident in her entries at our Lily Shows.

As the Christmas Season approaches, I hope that all of us will take the time to remember and appreciate the people we love. On behalf of the CPLS Executive, I wish each of you joyous times spent with family and friends, and I extend our wishes to you for a peaceful and happy 2003!

From the Editor's Desk.....

The December issue of the Canadian Prairie Lily Society Newsletter will be the 100th issue. The letter began in 1973 under the editorship of Herbert E. (aka Herb, Bert, and Bruno) Sunley. Herb presided as editor till 1989 and produced 49 issues. Herb is still active in the Society today sharing his knowledge and love of lilies. Herb handed over the "pen" to Allan Daku who edited the newsletter from 1989 to 1990 (#50-54). Allan then shared the "pen" with Diann Putland and Margaret Driver from 1991 to 1993 (#55-62). In Fall of 1993 Margaret was passed the "pen"

and with the help of Ed Driver the newsletter goes on! From manual to IBM Selectric typewriters, laptop computer and computer publishing programs the newsletter goes on. Producing a newsletter is both enjoyable and frustrating at the same time but when it's ready to print enjoyment wins out.

The CPLS executive would appreciate input regarding membership meetings - preferred meeting days and times, topics members are interested in. This would help greatly in organizing activities for members.

Let's hear your ideas.

How about writing for your newsletter?? The newsletter is a great way members can share their gardening experiences - good or bad we can learn from both! The CPLS newsletter can use articles about general lily culture, fertilizing, pot culture, forcing lilies, companion plants in lily beds, lily diseases/pests, hybridizing, lily species, lily classification, lilies in floral design, advances in lilies, showing lilies or notes based on your personal experiences growing/showing/hybridizing lilies are of great interest to all and can be very helpful. Collectively members have a tremendous amount of information that could be shared. This is of interest to all.

Would you like to SWAP books, bulbs, information ? Send your requests to the Editors make your newsletter work for you.

Margaret Musings.....

Martagons have a reputation for being fussy, this might be greatly overstated. The martagons that collected 'frequent flyer points' in 2000 and 2001 did very well in the garden this year, despite the 'uprooting' and poor spring 2002 they all bloomed! This was the signal to add to the collection so 'Orange Marmalade' and a Paisley hybrid enter the martagon bed. In 2003 we will be preparing an area at the side of the garage for martagons - the area gets both morning and late afternoon sun so it should be ideal.

This past summer we removed about 800 square feet of grass and prepared the area for flowers beds - that amount of empty garden space made my head spin. It was difficult to control myself and not attempt to fill the space immediately. Planting did not occur till fall and the first residents are the lily bulbs purchased at the CPLS sales and lily bulbs given by friends. My sister, Marlene, was able to get some of Dick Bazett's lily bulbs for me at the Manitoba Lily Society bulb sale and they got planted just ahead of the early snowfall. Fred Fellner seedlings have also returned to our lily beds - they are tried and true and should put on an interesting display next summer. With all the new plantings I can hardly wait till spring.

Another *tried and true lily* - 'Embarrassment' a favourite of mine has been growing in 14" pot for

Any article submitted will be considered for publication, please include your name and a complete address. Newsletter **DEADLINES** are February 15, May 15, August 15 and November 15. So get pen to paper, fingers to keyboard and send your words to :

Mail to: **CPLS NEWSLETTER EDITORS**
Margaret/Ed Driver
182 Dore Crescent
Saskatoon, SK, Canada
S7K 4X7

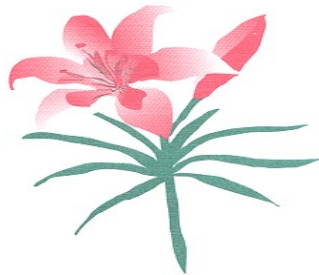
e-mail: mlily@sk.sympatico.ca

several years because I have not got around to planting it in the garden. Fall 2001 still not divided or planted in the ground, the pot was over-wintered buried in a large bag of peat moss. The shoots once again appeared this spring but the stems were not as vigorous as they were in the past - a sure signal to do something now! The stems dried off early, so I unpotted the bulbs which were undersized - not a surprise, but they appeared in good shape otherwise. I planted then in the garden where they should recover and once again produce sturdy stems.

I had the opportunity this summer to try the "Square Foot" method of gardening in the raised bed we have in the backyard. Years ago the Prairie Public Broadcasting Station (PBS) had a gardening show called the "Square Foot Gardener" and published a book as well. The method works very well. It is amazing what a square foot of soil can produce. Beans, carrots, peas, tomatoes, spinach, lettuce, onions, cucumbers and a variety of herbs were abundant and delicious throughout the summer and fall. I will certainly do "square-foot" gardening again in 2003.

The catalogues are beginning to appear in the mailbox to wet the gardener's appetite for 2003. Have a wonderful time checking these and making your list. My list for spring will include some trumpets, aurelians,

orienpets, and longipets which seem to do better for me if planted in spring. Spring is not far away and another growing season is on its way. The year 2002 will be remembered for its unusual quirks in the weather but being eternally optimistic when it comes to gardening 2003 can only be better. Good gardening to all! Margaret.



From a CPLS Scholarship Winner.....

Where does the money go after the bulb sales are over??? CPLS bulb sales profits are used to fund student scholarships/bursaries at the University of Saskatchewan and Olds College Alberta to ensure students can continue their pursuits in the field of horticulture. At this time I would like to share with you a letter from William Hrycan a scholarship recipient

Mr. Art Delahey
Canadian Prairie Lily Society
!8 Pony Trail
Riverside Estates, SK, S7T 1A2

September 26 2002

Dear Mr. Delahey,

As The 2001 recipient of the *Canadian Prairie Lily Society T.A. Dingwall Scholarship in Horticulture* I wish to express my gratitude to you, and the Canadian Prairie Lily Society, for your generous donation. This scholarship will go a long way towards easing financial pressure as I complete the final year of my BSc. in Agriculture at the University of Saskatchewan.

I began my horticultural education at Olds College, in Olds Alberta, and after two years transferred to the University of Saskatchewan in order to complete a horticulture degree. Now with only seven months remaining in my program I look forward to finishing my undergraduate studies, and I see my degree as an accomplishment I can be proud of.

After graduation I plan on completing my Master of Landscape Architecture from the University of Manitoba. There I will be able to combine my horticulture knowledge with my love of creativity and design to create beautiful outdoor living spaces.

Thank you again for your continuing support.

Sincerely,

William Hrycan.

Shirley Louise McKercher: Missed but not Forgotten

Shirley Louise McKercher (Howell) passed away on September 30, 2002. Shirley and I met through the Canadian Prairie Lily Society. Shirley's love for gardening and her generosity helped to establish the lily plot at the "Farm".

In the lily patch we (Shirley, Ed and myself) discovered we all attended the University of Manitoba at the same time. Shirley in the School of Interior Design and Ed and I in the Faculty of Science but our paths never crossed at that time. Little did we know that about twenty or more years later we would meet over lilies in lily patch!

Shirley brought a sparkle with her where ever she went - meeting rooms, lily patch or the kitchen. Shirley served a term as vice-president and was actively involved with the annual lily shows specializing the design section. My most vivid memories of Shirley are in the McKercher lily patch admiring the blooms on sunny summer days; and in the fall digging bulbs for the fall sale, replanting and clean-up for the next year; finding the last raspberries and ears of corn in Don's corn patch. Shirley was ever present lending a hand

and hauling 'stuff' with the ATV. Besides all this she from time to time spent pleasant interludes showing and discussing with Ed and me her paintings and willow stick creations.

Shirley would phone me in the morning with the following suggestion - "Margaret put your credit card in the microwave and heat it up you and I are going shopping" Her wit, humour, very Irish way, we as a Society have enjoyed this especially her Odes about Members!

In my garden there grows a lily named 'Irish Pixie' a vivid petite golden yellow lily which debuts very early and brings a glow to the garden - Shirley the original Irish pixie out shone her lily companion, she will be missed but not forgotten. ***Margaret Driver***

Membership renewals.....

Welcome to all new CPLS members. The December newsletter signals membership renewal time. Your membership expiry date can be found in the lower right corner of the address label on your newsletter. Membership runs from January 1 to December 31.

Only those members who are scheduled for renewal will get a membership renewal form in the December newsletter.

Members who have not renewed by January 31st, 2003, will still receive the March issue with a last reminder.

Thanks for renewing your membership on time, it does reduce "paper work". MED.