

# **Canadian Prairie Lily Society**

## **Newsletter**

December 2005

Number 110

### ***President's Message***

2005 is rapidly coming to a close. There is very little snow on the ground in the Saskatoon area and night temperatures are getting cold – it is November! Our Society has had a busy and successful year and your executive is looking forward and planning for the new year.

I would like to thank the executive and directors for making my job easy. A special thank you to our committee chairpersons– Jim Sullivan (Gardenscape), Barbara Adams Eichendorf (Lily Show), John Bond (Bulb Sales), John Bond, Stan Dunville, Art Delahey (Lily Plots), Ed Driver (web master) and the many volunteers who have contributed many hours to keep our society's activities rolling. If you have not been able to participate in 2005 you will have a chance in 2006 –the "Help Wanted" column will appear in upcoming newsletters!

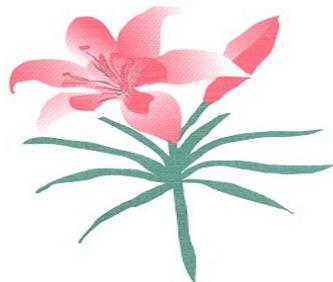
The last major event in 2005 was the Fall Bulb Sale – Members and General Public. Both were successful. Special thanks to all who worked at

making this event a successful one.

In spring 2006 you can look forward to the Annual General Meeting about mid-March and Gardenscape at the end of March; in summer 2006 the Show (with a new twist!) will once again be held at The Mall in Lawson Height; in fall 2006 the Bulb sale. Check the March newsletter for more information on times and places for these main events.

Garden catalogues are beginning to arrive so spring can't be to far away!

***Best wishes to you all this Festive Season. Great Gardening in 2006!***



## Letters to the Editor.....

I would like to tell you that I really enjoyed the September 2005 newsletter. I have just completed a letter to Barbara Holland re: Popularity Poll and I am looking forward to the poll results in a future newsletter.

I was glad to hear the annual lily show was a success. The past two years have been difficult weather wise (dry!) but this June was so cool and wet. I wondered what would happen with the lilies. However, the hot weather brought them into bloom and I thought this might be the year I would take some blooms to the show. But we had company come from BC on their motorcycle so I couldn't get away. Next year?

In "Fall and Winter Care of Lilies" you asked for comments on growing LA hybrids. The fall of 2002 I purchased 'Scarlet Star', 'Royal Present' and 'Royal Fantasy' from our annual sale. The first 2 years they grew but no blossoms. But this year they were spectacular- many large blossoms and new stems. The 'Scarlet Star' multiplied the most. The extra water in June must be the reason. I generally do not water my patch very much. I also do not fertilize either (I buy fertilizer and then don't use it). But this fall when I am replanting some of the bulbs, I will fertilize because there was so much growth this year. In the fall, I generally leave the stems to catch the snow cover as my patch is in an open area. But last fall I did a lot of dividing and replanting so there wasn't many stems left.

For the past few years I have had a "lily tea" in July when most of the lily plants are blooming. The first year I phoned about 30 ladies who I know are interested in gardens. Not many ladies in our area were growing 'lilies' when I had my first tea but now most of the "tea" ladies have some of my "extra" bulbs growing in their flower gardens. Last year I had so many extra bulbs that I did take some to Mr. Bond. But fall is so busy with harvest that I can't always get to the city for the sale so I usually order by mail 2 or 3 new lilies each year. So slowly my lily patch is increasing while my vegetable space

is decreasing.

Thank you again for all the work you do for our newsletter.

Sincerely, **Patricia Adams. Strongfield,**  
**Saskatchewan**

**P.S.** I forgot to mention my "failure". I also bought 'Black Beauty' an OT in 2002. Although the bulb has grown each year, it is not doing well. It had tiny flowers in 2004 and 2005 but only grew about 20" tall and the bulb has not multiplied at all. Perhaps it needs fertilizer to grow larger. I may replant it this fall into a different location and put fertilizer in the new spot.

**[Editors reply:** Thank you very much for your letter. We are sure our members and fellow lily enthusiasts will enjoy reading about your experience with lilies. The NALS popularity Poll should be very interesting and results will appear in the newsletter as soon as they are available. We did wonder about the 2005 Show and what lilies might appear but we were pleasantly surprised. You never know what is going to happen on the prairies every year is a challenge. I also have 'Scarlet Star' (planted 2002) and 'Royal Fantasy' (planted 2001) in the garden. In 2004 'Scarlet Star' bloomed -two flowers on a stem that looked more like an asparagus than a lily and 'Royal Fantasy' did not make an appearance. That fall I dug the bed and found that both lilies had very good bulbs and had multiplied so I threw the earth back in place and mulched the area with leaves. In 2005 both lilies really made their presence known especially 'Scarlet Star'. Now to your 'Black Beauty' a new spot and some fertilizer may be just the answer. I grow 'Black Beauty' in a protected area close to the house; it grows about 48", blooms late and this year a second smaller stem was produced. This is my second try at growing 'Black Beauty' the first was not a success! Your idea of a "lily tea" is great—this gives gardeners not familiar with lilies a chance to see "lilies in action". Once again thank you for taking the time to share your lily

experiences with us. MED/EAD.], CPLS editors,182  
Dore Crescent, Saskatoon, S7K 4X7; e-mail  
mlily@sasktel.net

## ***Letters to Canadian Prairie Lily Society.....***

### **Honeywood**

(Dr. A.J. Porter) Heritage Nursery

**Box 48**

**Parkside, SK S0J 2A0**

September 28, 2005

Dear Members of the 'Canadian Prairie Lily Society'

I would like to thank the members of the 'Canadian Prairie Lily Society' for their on going support of Honeywood (Dr. A.J. Porter) Heritage Nursery.

Your generous donations over the years have helped to support and maintain our efforts for restoring the nursery and grounds once owned and operated by the late Dr. A.J. Porter.

We sincerely appreciate your nomination of our group for the Prairie Garden Award of Excellence this spring. Thanks to your nomination we received this award and with it the recognition of our work. Byron

Waterhouse, Rhoda Aug (two very active owners) and I went to Winnipeg on the 21<sup>st</sup> September to receive the award on September 22<sup>nd</sup>. We had a very enjoyable tour of Winnipeg with Roger Brown on the 22nd. We visited Hillcrest Harmony Flowers on our way to Winnipeg and the "The Lily Nook" on our way home so it proved to be a very informative trip.

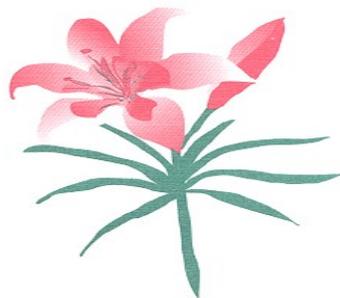
Once again, thank you to the 'Canadian Prairie Lily Society' for your support.

Sincerely

Judy Harley

Manager

Honeywood (Dr. A.J. Porter) Heritage Nursery



## Patterson Lilies which CPLS needs...!!!

CPLS is looking for bulbs or bulblets of the following Patterson lilies- 'Indian Princess', 'Pink Charm', 'Rose Cup', 'Rose Queen', and 'Fairy Pink'. If you have any of these lilies and could spare a bulb or bulblet the society would appreciate this greatly. Please contact:

Art Delahey, 18 Pony Trail, Riverside Estates, SK, S7T 1A2; e-mail:rivgardlilies@shaw.ca

## CPLS website - [www.prairielily.ca](http://www.prairielily.ca)

The CPLS website was accessed by 7100 visitors from 43 countries. in its first eleven months of life! The top pages viewed are the series on lily culture which include planting, and hybridizing followed by members gardens, cultural techniques, annual CPLS show, CPLS history and activities; and CPLS Resource page. In more detail the visits to the site: were in excess of 100 thousand hits and the transfer of more than 1.8 gigabits of information .

I would appreciate receiving articles and accompanying photos from members wish to submit. Many society members grow more than lilies, photos of your gardens are most welcome as are your comments about the companion plants that you grow with your lilies. Thanks to all that have helped with photos and articles to date!

You can contact me at [webmaster@prairielily.ca](mailto:webmaster@prairielily.ca) or at [edriver@sasktel.net](mailto:edriver@sasktel.net) or by mail at 182 Dore Crescent Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, S7K 4X7.

Kind regards  
Ed (E.A. Driver)

## NALS memberships - read and consider joining

Please consider joining the North American Lily Society, the society offers a variety of information through its Quarterly Bulletin and Yearbook, through a website, and through discussion groups. Annual membership is \$25 or \$70 for three years (Canadian). Funds may be submitted to D. Nelson, (Canadian NALS contact person) 3820 20th Avenue Regina S4S 0P4 You can learn more about NALS by going to the Links pages on [www.prairielily.ca](http://www.prairielily.ca) and clicking on the link to the North American Lily Society

# My Favourite Perennial Companion Plants for Lilies.....Barbara Adams-Eichendorf

My yard is located 50 kilometers north of Saskatoon in the Village of Hepburn. I have been gardening here for more than 20 years and have tried an assortment of lilies and perennials in various locations throughout the yard over that time. My soil tends to be a bit heavy; I would say it is a silty clay-loam. It holds a lot of water and doesn't drain as well as lilies would like. As well, once it dries out, it takes a lot of water to wet it again. The topsoil varies in depth, usually around a foot deep, with a very heavy clay subsoil. Fortunately, the yard is gently sloped in most areas, so excess water can drain away.

I grow mostly Asiatic lilies, some Martagons and a few species lilies. The species lilies that have grown well for me are *L. dauricum*, *L. pumilum* and *L. martagon*. I have tried to grow Oriental and Trumpet lilies as well as OTs but have had limited success growing these in the ground. Wilbert Ronald's 'Starburst Sensation' has been the best of the OTs in my yard. Orientals and OTs have done well grown in pots. I leave them in the pots year-round; I don't bury them for winter but cover them with a layer of about 10 inches of mulch (post peelings).

I think that lilies look very attractive in mixed borders with perennials and maybe a few annuals. By using a mix of early, mid and late blooming perennials, along with annuals, you can have continuous bloom from early spring, through the lily blooming season and into fall. Also, perennials add interest to the mixed border with different foliage textures and plant shapes.

To be worthy of inclusion on this list, the perennials had to have survived in my yard for 10 years or more, with minimal care and no special treatment for winter. And for every perennial that has thrived under my care, I'm sure I've purchased ten that have languished and died. This has not always been the fault of the plant – I like to push the limits and often try Zone 4 and sometimes Zone 5 plant material. I've tried them all, from *Alchemilla*, *Agastache* and *Oenothera* to *Pachysandra*, *Tricyrtis* and *Tiarella*.

Also, badly behaved perennials were not allowed on the list. Included in this group are *Geranium* 'Johnson's Blue' and *Achillea millefolium* (Yarrow), both of which are very invasive in my yard. Both of these perennials get high marks for durability, but they seem to be very

hard to get rid of once established. Also included on the list are perennials that don't get along with lilies. Peonies are a special favorite of mine, but I have found that lilies planted too close to peonies seem to disappear, probably because they couldn't compete with the peony's huge root system. I would suppose that because both lilies and peonies share a susceptibility to the fungal disease botrytis, that they should not be considered good companion plants for each other. I also have not included *Nepeta* (catmint), even though I quite like the plant. I have never had one grow more than 6 inches high before being grazed to the ground by thrill-seeking felines in search of a high. I have also not included plants that are short lived. It really like penstemons, but have found that they only live 3 or 4 years. So, the perennials listed here are the toughest of the trugh, surviving the extremes of Zone 2 weather and lending their beauty to the perennial border. This is not to imply that they are perfect - only that their shortcomings are ones that I am prepared to live with.

And, as with most articles about gardening, there is a certain degree of subjectivity. (Let's be honest – it's totally subjective!) Each of us gardeners has an opinion about what we like and what we truly despise and the quirky and sometimes illogical reasons for our choices may have no bases in reality. However, we like what we like!

As I reviewed the list, I noticed that many of the perennials I like have blue flowers. Blue-flowered perennials make a lovely complement to the red, yellow, pink and white lilies and of course are beautiful in combination with orange. The perennials that I will describe here are all grown in full sun. I grow a different set of perennials in shade with the Martagon lilies but that will have to be another article.

I would have to say that campanulas (bellflowers) are among my favorites as lily companions. The peach-leaved bellflower, *Campanula persicifolia*, is about 2-3 feet tall with spikes of clear, medium blue, bell-shaped flowers, about 2" long and an inch wide, facing outwards. It is also available in a white form and both grow well in full sun or partial shade. It blooms over a fairly long period, usually all of July when most of the lilies are in bloom. In my yard, it often continues to give

blossoms well into September. (This year some of the peach-leaved bellflowers were still blooming in October and stopped when we had a killing frost.)

There are many different bellflowers available for garden culture ranging in height from 6" ground cover to 24-36" mid-to back-border size. My other top pick from this genus is the clustered bellflower, *Campanula glomerata*. It blooms in early to mid summer and in my yard grow to about 18" to 24" in height. The blooms are medium to dark blue and are, as the name suggests, clustered along the bloom spike. The plant forms a low, spreading mat of leaves from which the bloom spikes rise. My all-time favorite bellflower is *C. glomerata* 'Caroline' which is a lovely lilac color with a pinkish throat. I am also impressed with the white form of the clustered bellflower. The blossoms are a very clean white and look good with any lily color.

The clustered bellflower does spread by underground roots and will form a very large mat over time. This may be considered a shortcoming by some, but it does give plant material to move to other places in the yard and when you have a large yard this habit is seen as a positive rather than a negative attribute.

For all around toughness, hardiness and bug and disease resistance, I give high praise to the gas plant, *Dictamnus albus*. In my yard it grows to about 2-3 feet in height and produces racemes of pale pink flowers with darker veining for a few weeks starting in June. The plant gives off a lemony fragrance, from leaves as well as flowers and can cause skin irritation in some people. I'm sure that the oils in the plant that give it the pleasant smell and act as a bug deterrent, as I have never seen any sign of insect damage on it. The compound leaves are dark, glossy green and very attractive. I also have the white-flowered form of this plant in my yard but I don't like it as well as the pink. Gas plant blooms at the same time as Bert Porter's 'Jolly Miller' which is a peach orange color and one of the earliest blooming Asiatic lilies in my yard. Gas plant is a bit slow to get established and hates to be moved, but once settled in is a very durable and long-lived plant.

Salvia is another of my favorite perennials, and one of the things I like most about the plant has nothing to do with appearance. It is a member of the mint family and has a most attractive fragrance when you crush a leaf with your fingers. There are a few different cultivars of *Salvia* available, including 'Rose Queen' (rose-pink), 'Blue

Queen' (medium blue) and 'May Night' (dark purplish-blue) The plant grows to about 18" tall in my yard and has dense spikes of small flowers. I particularly like the combination of 'May Night' with orange or yellow lilies. *Salvia* are a good cut-flower and bloom through July and August in my yard.

Similar to *Salvia* in appearance and colors available is Speedwell or *Veronica*. I have several different speedwells in my yard. The earliest-blooming is *Veronica gentianoides*, Gentian Speedwell, which forms basal leaves, and has 1 foot tall spikes of pale blue, half-inch wide flowers in mid-spring. Hungarian Speedwell (*Veronica austriaca* or *V. teucrim*) has been reliable for an early-summer splash of blue at the front of the border for many years. It doesn't self seed or travel by underground roots, but does tend to be a bit floppy after blooming, a habit which is easily remedied by a light trim with the shears. The durable *Veronica spicata*, or Spike Speedwell, blooms in July and August, at the same time as most of the Asiatic lilies. In my yard, it is about 2 feet tall with spikes of small flowers of medium blue color, which makes a nice contrast with almost any lily color. *Veronica spicata* subsp. *incana* forms a mat of silvery, felty foliage and has 12" spikes of small, dark blue flowers in July. The latest-blooming Speedwell in my yard is a deep rose-colored cultivar called 'Red Fox', which blooms in August. Spike Speedwell makes a nice cut-flower filler with lilies for floral arrangements. My only complaint about it would be that it self seeds a little too freely if I don't get the deadheading done in time.

Another blue-flowered perennial that I look forward to seeing at lily time is *Scabiosa caucasica*, or Pincushion flower. It has fairly large flat flowers, about 3 inches across, with a pincushion-like center. The flowers are lilac-blue in color and I think it may be a cultivar named 'Clive Greaves'. (Both the plant tag and the info that was once in my brain regarding the cultivar name has vanished.) The plant itself is bushy, about 12" tall and 18" wide, with the flowers held singly on wiry stems above the foliage. To a height of about 3 feet. I have grown two other members of this genus and was not impressed with either. The first was *Scabiosa columbaria* 'Butterfly Blue', which is a lovely plant when seen in the garden center but I couldn't get it to survive more than a couple of years in my yard. The other is *Scabiosa gigantea* syn *Cephalaria gigantea*. It is hardy and pest-free, about 18" wide by 5 feet tall, but the flower color, described as primrose yellow, is not to

my liking. It is a pale, greenish yellow and not terribly attractive, at least to me.

Daylilies or *Hemerocallis* are non-blue flowering perennials that have stood the test of time in prairie gardens. They are members of the same plant family as lilies, the family Liliaceae, but are fibrous-rooted rather than bulbous. Two of my favorites are the yellow-flowered 'Stella d'Oro' and the burgundy red-flowered 'Pardon Me'. These are both small sized daylilies, about 15 inches tall, both with smallish sized flowers, but what I like about them is the fact that they both produce tons of bloom over a long period. 'Stella' like particularly nice planted next to the short, bi-color pink and yellow lily named 'Denia'.

Further exploration of my non-blue perennial favorites brings me to false sunflower or *Heliopsis helianthoides*. This is a 4 to 5 foot tall, yellow-flowered late blooming perennial which is native to North America. The flowers look somewhat like little sunflowers, and it makes a good background plant behind later-blooming lilies. In my yard I have planted it near 'Starburst Sensation' and the combination of yellow and pink looks attractive in late August when both are in bloom. I also have *Heliopsis* 'Lorraine Sunshine', which has similar flowers but attractive variegated foliage, creamy white with green veins. While not quite as drought tolerant as many of my favorites, false sunflower has survived a long time in my yard because I remember to give it the odd pail of water during the dry spells.

Now for more blue. *Aconitum* or monkshood has been a favorite of mine for many years. This is a plant that I have grown in full sun in one area and in partial shade with martagons lilies in another area. As long as moisture is adequate, monkshood performs well in either situation. Monkshoods are available mostly in shades of blue and purplish-blue, but there are pink and yellow forms available as well. The cultivar 'Bicolor' is particularly attractive, with white flowers edged with blue. The plant is quite tall, about 4 feet and the flowers are borne in tall spikes. The shape of the flowers gives the plant its common name; the one inch flowers face outward and the top petal of the flowers bulges up into a hood-like shape. Monkshood is poisonous, but apparently not to the little green worms that sometimes infest it. (These are same little green worms that enjoy a feast of Delphiniums in spring. Monkshood and Delphinium belong to the

same plant family: *Ranunculaceae*.)

Another blue-flowered perennial on my list is *Eryngium* or Sea Holly. This is a fairly tall perennial growing to about 3 feet with a basal rosette of large, spoon shaped green leaves. The spikes of blooms rise above the leaf rosette and have many, spiny-collared flower heads. The flower head as well as the stems turn a lovely metallic blue. This is a great plant to use for dried flowers, as well as fresh cut with lilies. My only complaint about this perennial is that it self seeds aggressively if not dead-headed.

Common Baby's Breath, *Gypsophyla paniculata*; I know it is a weed, it's so ordinary, well, it's just common. But it's also very hardy, and looks especially lovely with pink lilies. I have grown it side-by-side with 'Yum Yum' a shortish pink lily with a spotted white center. The baby's breath is a light and airy contrast to the large bold lily flowers. (You can see my photo of these plants together on the cover of the March 2000NALS quarterly Bulletin.)

As you know, lilies like to have cool roots, even when grown in full sun. One of my favorite ground covers to grow with lilies is Russian Stonecrop, *Sedum kamtschaticum*. It grows from 5 to 8 inches tall and has fleshy succulent foliage, which makes it quite drought tolerant. It has little starry yellow flowers for most of the summer and gradually spread out to form a shallow-rooted mat. Because the roots are shallow, they don't compete much with the lilies for moisture and they shade the soil. There are many stonecrops available for prairie gardens, but the Russian stonecrop has been the most reliable for me.

Cornflowers or *Centaurea* are another group of plants that I have found to be hardy and reliable in my yard. Of the three perennial cornflowers I have grown, my favorite is the Persian cornflower, *Centaurea dealbata*. This plant is about 2 feet tall with rose-pink flowers which look feathery around the outside and shade to cream in the center. Goldfinches visit the flowers regularly during the long bloom period. This perennial is not invasive and does not spread by underground roots like the mountain bluet, *Centaurea montana*. The yellow-flowered *Centaurea macrocephala* is a tall plant; in a summer with lots of rain it easily reaches 4 feet or more in height. The flowers are interesting, with a base of shiny brown bracts topped by a puffy dome of yellow petals.

I have tried numerous perennial cranesbills (*Geraniums*) over the years and have had limited success with them. The Bigroot Cranesbill, *G. macrorrhizum*, grew well for me for many years but died out during the extreme drought a few years ago. Likewise *G. phaeum*, *G. sanguineum*, 'Spinner', 'Max Frei', 'Biokovo' and *G. endressii* have all had limited success. Surprisingly, the best perennial cranesbill in my yard has been the tall (2-3 feet) *G. pratense*, which I grew from seed. I has a good show of light blue flowers in early summer.

An article about perennials would not be complete without mentioning my favorite late-blooming perennial and my favorite early one. There is no blue quite like the blue of gentians. Gentians have been well behaved and long-lived perennials in my yard. My top pick from this genus is *Gentiana septemfida*, which is a late-blooming species. It usually blooms in August, when many other perennials are finished, and most of the lilies are finished as well.

My favorite early-blooming perennial is the crocus or pasqueflower, *Pulsatilla vulgaris*. This is a close relative of our native prairie crocus, *Pulsatilla patens*, but is much better adapted to garden culture and blooms a few weeks later. In early spring, before the fern-leaved peony bursts into bloom, and before the martagons lilies even have their buds showing, pasqueflowers garbed in wooly stem-warmers, with furred flowers in shades of wine and purple make a statement that spring is here indeed, and gardening shall begin in earnest for another year.

These are my favorite perennials to grow in sunny locations as companions with lilies. I started out intending to just name 10 but as the article unfolded, I found it difficult to keep the list under control. There are lots of good perennial plants for prairie gardens and of course all couldn't be listed here. In an upcoming newsletter, I'll tell you about my favorite perennials to grow with martagons lilies in shade. This list includes *Thalictrum*, *Astrantia*, and *Ranunculus*.

I invite readers to share their favorites with us. Let us know if some of my favorites are yours as well, or if you have a whole different set of perennials you like to grow with lilies. Write us a short note or a whole article! Be sure to let us know what your soil and moisture conditions are.