

Storing Bulbs Over winter - by Margaret Driver, CPLS Newsletter #91:5-6

Why did I buy all these bulbs? Why did they arrive so late? What am I going to do with these bulbs? Has this happened to you? There have been several occasions when I have had to store large numbers of lily bulbs over winter (mid October to mid April) without access to a cold room. I devised the garbage tin-peat moss method and it works!

The materials for this method are simple - a large Rubbermaid garbage container, 17 gal or 77.3 liter size or a similar sized galvanized one either serve as the storage container; newspaper, this is optional, to line the container; and a large bale of peat moss - these are the insulators. You'll need a large scrub pail about 10 inches in diameter (about 25 cm) to form the storage space; "baggies" (sandwich bags - 16 by 14 cm) to hold the bulbs; garden sulphur as an optional fungicide; plastic labels; and a marking pen.

If you are digging bulbs and plan to store them, it is best to remove the wet soil from the bulbs and sun dry the bulbs for an hour or more. This will prevent the bulbs from rotting during storage. The bulbs should be dusted with garden sulphur. Put a handful of dry peat moss in the sandwich bag, add the label, the bulb, and close the bag - it's ready to store.

Prepare the storage container by lining the bottom and sides with several sheets of newspaper, then place at least 4-6 inches (10-15 cm) of peat moss in the bottom of the container. Next place the scrub pail in the middle of the Rubbermaid container on the peat moss layer and fill peat moss around the pail, thus form an "insulated storage core". Add the packaged bulbs and continue building the insulated storage core as needed. Leave at least 4 inches between the last layer of bulbs and the cover, to this space add a layer of insulating peat and newspaper. This method will surround the bulbs with a minimum of 4 inches of insulation for overwintering. I was able to store about 150-200 bulbs in this type of storage container. In the past I have placed the insulated container in an unheated tool shed, and more recently in an unheated garage. In either type of building the results were more than satisfactory. Storing directly out of doors in a sheltered spot with some snow cover would probably work - although I have not tried this.

In Fall 1999 I stored 51 lily cultivars - Asiatic hybrids (Div I), Longiflorum-Asiatic hybrids (LAs), Trumpet hybrids (Div VI), Orientpet hybrids (Div VIII) and Aurelian-Asiatic hybrids (Div VIII). In past years I have stored some martagon hybrids.

Generally the asiatic hybrids, martagons hybrids, Longiflorum-asiatic hybrids, and Aurelian-asiatic hybrids have survive storage the best; orientpet hybrids were marginal (here bulb condition is important even bulbs in good condition had problems). The longiflorum and trumpet bulbs stored very poorly even when the condition of these bulbs at storage was considered as in excellent condition.

Lilies Stored

Rating of condition of the bulbs after winter storage: r = rotted; s=sprouts present < 0.5in; m = mould; 0 = poor; + = good; ++ excellent; p = potted in April 2000; g = growth in summer 2000 -= poor; +=good; +=excellent.

ORIENTPETS: Starburst Sensation (r); Northern Sensation (m;0;p;g0); Northern Carillon (m;0;p;g+); Northern Beauty (++;p;g++)

TRUMPETS: Tetra Trumpet (Cebeco) (r); Jendruck Seedling (r)

AURELIAN-ASIATIC Hybrids: Creamy Belles (+;p;g+); Firey Belles (++;p;g+); Silky Belles (++;p;g++); Purple Belles (0;p;g0)

LONGIFLORUM-ASIATIC Hybrids: Casa Rosa (m;0;p;g-none); La Paz (++;p;g++); My Fair Lady (++;p;g++); Royal Love (m;0;p;g+); Royal Victory (s;++;p;g+).

ASIATIC Hybrids: 10 Alex Burnett Seedling (++;p;g++); Ariadne (s;++;p;g+); Bel Ami (s;++;p;g+); Bicolor Ballerina (s;++;p;g++); Butter Pixie (++;p;g++); Dawn Delight (++;p;g++); Denia (m;s+;p;g+); Ed Brooman (s;++;p;g0); Embarrassment (s;++;p;g++); Fleur de Lis (s;++;p;g++); George Slate (++;p;g++); Helios (++;p;g++); Jewel Pixie (s;++;p;g++); Katinka (++;p;g++); Lavender Splash (s;++;p;g++); Misty (s;++;p;g++); Modern Butterfly (s;++;p;g++); New Dawn (s;++;p;g++); Northern Princess (s;++;p;g++); Pan (++;p;g++); Paulus Potter (++;p;g++); Pink Pixie (++;p;g++); (s;+;p;g+); Reta's Comet (s;++;p;g++); Robinson's Comet (s;++;p;g++); Rosepoint Lace (s;+;p;g+); Shiraz (s;+;p;g+); Sphinx (s;++;p;g++); Startling (-m;p;g none); Sungod (s;++;p;g++); Suntan (s;++p;g++); Super Nova (s;++;p;g++); Tropicana (++;p;g++); White Babies (s;++;p;g++); and Yum Yum (s;++;p;g++).