

Suggestions For Growing Croft Lilies Bulbs In All Pacific Northwest States

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For benefit of Pilot readers, a pamphlet on culture of Easter lilies, written by E. P. Breakey, of Washington State College, will be printed, in serial fashion in these columns. Being lengthy, it may require as many as four weeks to complete the article:

What Is The Croft Lily?

To many it may seem incredible, but the question is often asked, "What is the Croft Lily?"

Since there are those who are interested in taking up the culture of the Croft lily, and since these suggestions are intended primarily for the guidance of the beginner, a definition of the Croft lily seems to be in order.

The Croft lily is an Easter lily suitable for forcing as a potted plant. It was named for Sydney Croft, who once lived at Markham, Wash., but who later became mayor of the little sea-coast town of Bandon, Oregon. It was while Mr. Croft lived at Bandon that a Mr. Houghton began growing lilies for Dr. David Griffiths.

Dr. Griffiths had collected a number of clones (by "clone" we mean the descendants of a single plant. For example, all Golden Delicious apple trees are division of the same tree. So it is that all Croft lilies are divisions of the same plant. These divisions may have originated from the little bulblets that are produced when scales from the mother bulb are propagated, from stem bulblets that form on the underground portions of the stem, or from divisions of the mother bulb) of the Easter Lily (*Lilium longiflorum* Thumb) and sent them to Mr. Houghton who was to investigate the possibilities of producing domestic stocks of these lilies for the Easter trade.

Bandon is a small town and Mr. Croft was an Englishman, apparently with an Englishman's interest in gardening, so it was only natural that when Mr. Houghton began propagating lilies Mr. Croft should become interested in the venture. Later, Mr. Croft acquired some of these lilies and he, too, tried his hand at their culture.

It was not long until Mr. Croft became an enthusiastic promoter of the new venture, and from time to time interested others in the work. We do not wish to detract from the contributions that others have made toward the establishment of the industry in the Pacific northwest, yet it must be admitted that if it hadn't been for Mr. Croft's enthusiasm, it is

doubtful if the industry would have yet become established.

Where Can Be Grown?

Croft lilies are being grown successfully all the way from Northern California to British Columbia. Many people have the erroneous impression that the Croft lily must be grown within sight of the Pacific ocean. It is true that *Lilium longiflorum* is often called a maritime species and that it is a native of the Ryukyu Islands, south of Japan. Experience has shown, however, that the Croft lily will do well any place west of the Cascades that is free of severe frosts. In other words, the Croft lily will thrive in an equitable climate having mild winters and cool summers.

Planting Site Choice

There are certain fundamental considerations which one should have in mind when choosing a site for growing lilies. The site should be well drained and should be exposed to the free circulation of air. Avoid stuffy locations cut off by tall timber, buildings, or by brushy fence rows. The site should also be free of noxious weeds, such as quack grass, Canada thistles, morning glories and other pests of similar nature.

Soils For Croft Lilies

Croft lilies appreciate a good soil. The preferred soil should be a friable sandy loam, rich in organic matter. It should be well drained, since lilies as a class are intolerant of water-logged land. If water table should rise above the bulbs, even for a short time in the winter, it probably be their ruin. On the other hand, the soil should provide an ample supply of moisture during the growing season. Lilies make their maximum growth during the months of May, June, July, August, and part of September; hence it is a distinct advantage if the soil is subirrigated during the growing season. Lilies can be irrigated but that is an added expense.

Preparation of Seed Bed

The soil should be prepared well in advance of planting the crop. Whenever possible, it is advisable to summer fallow the ground in order to destroy as many weeds as possible. Many growers apply a liberal amount of cow manure early in the summer and plow this under. Peat, preferably in an advanced state of decomposition, is also used as a source of organic matter. The ground is then cultivated at regular intervals during the following summer months in order to destroy as many weeds as

possible and to put the soil in good tilth.

Crop Rotation

The ideal method would be to prepare twice as much land as one expected to plant. In the early fall, half of this land would be planted to a cover crop of rye and vetch, and a little later the other half would be planted to lilies. The following spring the half in cover crop would be plowed under as soon as the grain starts to head out and while there was still moisture enough in the soil for rapid decay. A cover crop can be a very valuable asset or it can become a menace. If it should become too mature, or the ground too dry to rot the vegetation once it is plowed under, it may rob the soil of needed moisture and tie up valuable plant food. Some growers begin by discing the cover crop into the ground, then apply a liberal amount of cow manure and plow both under. The land is then summer fallowed during the summer months for the purpose of killing weeds and putting the soil in good tilth to receive the bulbs at planting time in the fall. As soon as the bulbs have been removed from the other half of the field in September, it is immediately fertilized, plowed and planted to cover crop. Thus the lilies are rotated from one field to another and the fertility of the land is improved from year to year. Also the danger of injuring the lily bulbs from contact with raw manures or fertilizers is avoided.

Choice of Planting Stock

The beginner should endeavor to secure his planting stock from a grower who has a pure selection of the Croft lily and who understands the growing and care of

lily bulbs. The bulbs should have been dug when mature and should have been handled and stored in such a manner that they were not injured by heating, desiccation (drying out) or by rough handling. The beginner may start by planting only stem bulblets. If he does, it will be two years before any of them are old enough to put on the market for forcing. If he plants yearlings, whether he has raised them from stem bulblets or purchased them from another grower, he should have bulbs of forcing size at the end of the first year, and his yearling should have produced a stock of stem bulblets

which will be available for forcing.

Continued next week

Weather Report

For the past week, ending Sunday:		
	Max	Min
August 19	60	50
August 20	59	55
August 21	58	52
August 22	59	50
August 23	59	51
August 24	59	53
August 25	67	52
Total rain for week		

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