

Circular (University of Alaska, Fairbanks.  
Agricultural Experiment Station)

# Lilies for Alaska

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AGRICULTURAL EXPERIMENT STATION

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Fairbanks, Alaska

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Modern hybrid lilies are among the showiest perennials that can be grown by the interior Alaska gardener. There are several groups, or classes, of lilies available, not all of which are hardy here. Within a given group, there are many cultivars, which may or may not be hardy. We will, therefore, de-

scribe for you in this circular a number of lily cultivars which have proven to be hardy at the Agricultural Experiment Station at Fairbanks, and indicate those groups of lilies in which the adventurous gardener would be most likely to find additional hardy varieties.



Enchantment, an Asiatic hybrid with large upfacing flowers.

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Cover: Fiesta, an Asiatic hybrid with pendant, slightly reflexed flowers in bright colors.



Brenda Watts, an Asiatic hybrid with outfacing, reflexed flowers.

### General Background

Lilies are monocotyledonous plants which form true bulbs. The lily bulb is protected by soil and snow cover during the winter, and there are no above-ground parts to suffer winter injury. Hardy lilies are more likely to be damaged by poor cultural practices (poor drainage, lack of water, or poor nutrition) than they are by cold, as long as there is adequate snow cover. Once planted, a bed of lilies should give many years' enjoyment.

### Culture

Lily bulbs are available in garden catalogs both spring and fall. In interior Alaska, they should be planted only in the spring, so the plants can get well established before summer. It is best to purchase them just before planting, unless the gardener has proper facilities for storing them. Unlike most bulbs, lilies should always be kept cool (35-40°F) and moist (surrounded by peat or sawdust) whenever they are not in the ground. The bulbs should not be

## Recommended Lilies for Interior Alaska

Name	Type	Bloom Time at Fairbanks	Descriptions, Comments
<i>L. pumilum</i> (Siberian coral lily)	Species	Late June	Highly recommended. Small red-orange, reflexed-pendant flowers. Bulbs do not increase well, but plant is easily grown from seed.
<i>L. elegans</i>	Species	Late June	Flowers 3", dark orange with spots, upfacing in terminal cluster.
Hardy Yellow	unknown	Late June	Plants small (12") but vigorous. Probably an improved strain of <i>L. elegans</i> . Color slightly darker.
Paisley Hybrids	Martagon	Early July	Small pastel, reflexed-pendant flowers. Color varies—many are beige with spots.
Brenda Watts	Asiatic	Mid-July	Highly recommended. Flowers 3", red-orange, spotted, reflexed, outfacing. Plants very vigorous and multiply well.
Backhouse Hybrids	Martagon	Mid-July	Flowers small, loosely reflexed, pendant with delicate waxy appearance. Color varies.
Lemon Queen	Asiatic	Mid-July	Flowers 3", bright yellow, spotted, reflexed, outfacing. Plants vigorous but do not multiply well. Good companion for Brenda Watts.*
Buff	Asiatic	Mid-July	Flowers 3", pale apricot—almost beige, spotted, reflexed, outfacing. Plants vigorous, multiply well. Good companion for Brenda Watts.
Cinnabar	Asiatic	Mid-July	Flowers 4", dark orange, upfacing, in terminal cluster. Plants short (12") but vigorous, multiply well.



Enchantment	Asiatic	Early August	Highly recommended. Flowers large (4"-5"), bright orange with spots, upfacing in terminal cluster. Vigorous, multiplies well. A named variety from the Mid-Century Hybrids.
Joan Evans	Asiatic	Early August	Highly recommended. Flowers yellow-orange, with spots, upfacing in terminal cluster. Good companion for Enchantment.
Redbird	Asiatic	Early August	Flowers 4", deep red with spots, outfacing, slightly reflexed. Plant vigorous but does not multiply well.
Jasper	Asiatic	Early August	Highly recommended. Flowers 4", dusty rose with spots (an unusual color in lilies), outfacing, slightly reflexed. Plant vigorous, multiplies well. Good companion for Redbird.
Lyla McCann	Asiatic	Early August	Flowers 4", bright orange with spots, in terminal cluster on small plant (12").
Prosperity	Asiatic	Early August	Flowers 3"-4", bright yellow with spots, in terminal cluster. Plant very vigorous, multiples well.
Fiesta Hybrids	Asiatic	Early August	Flowers 3"-4", in bright mixture of colors, spotted. Plants vigorous but do not multiply.
<i>L. tigrinum</i>	Species	Late August	Flower 3", bright orange with large spots. The true "tiger lily."

**NOTE:** The following lilies have also been reported hardy by gardeners in the Fairbanks area: *L. cernuum* and *L. concolor* (species), Destiny, Paprika, Apricot Glow, and Mid-Century Hybrids (all Asiatics).

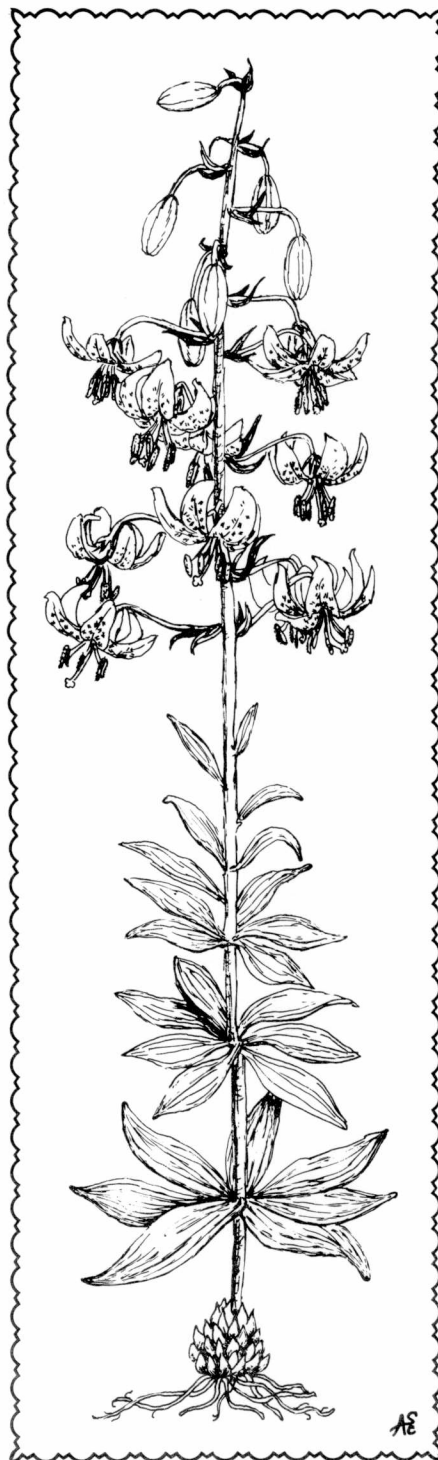
\*Varieties which have been designated as "good companions" are similar in growth habit, flower type, and bloom time, and have colors which are compatible.

ordered too early because of the danger of freezing en route.

Most lily bulbs, except very small ones, are planted 6" deep. A larger hole should be dug, and the native soil replaced with a mixture of equal parts of peat, sand, and soil for better drainage. Do not use fresh manure. The site for the lily bed should be in full sun, or nearly so, and well drained. Many people plant lilies in raised beds up against the house on the south, east, or west side. This is fine as long as they get adequate water in the summer and snow cover in the winter. They should be fertilized with a complete fertilizer similar to that which you use on your home garden each spring. If the flowers are cut for home use, at least 2/3 of the stalk should be left on the bulb in order to leave sufficient foliage for replacement of storage materials in the fall.

#### Classification

So many hybrid lilies have been bred in recent years that they have been organized by horticulturists into nine groups, based on the ancestry of the parent lilies. Lilies within a group are generally similar in appearance and cultural requirements. An exception to this would be the group of true species lilies which originate all over the world and display the complete range of diversity of the genus *Lilium*. Several species lilies are hardy at Fairbanks, Alaska, and are therefore included in the following list. Aside from species lilies, almost all the cultivars hardy enough for interior Alaska fall into that group called *Asiatic hybrids*. The original parents of this group are *L. concolor*, *L. dauricum*, *L. tigrinum*, and other species from Asia. The flower form is variable (flowers may be up-facing, out-facing, or pendant, and open or reflexed), but the colors are generally intense rather than pale, and most cultivars are spotted. With two exceptions, all of the hardy hybrid lilies listed are Asiatic hybrids, and the gardener who wishes to experiment on his own would



Paisley, a Martagon hybrid, showing growth habit. Flowers come in a range of pastel colors.

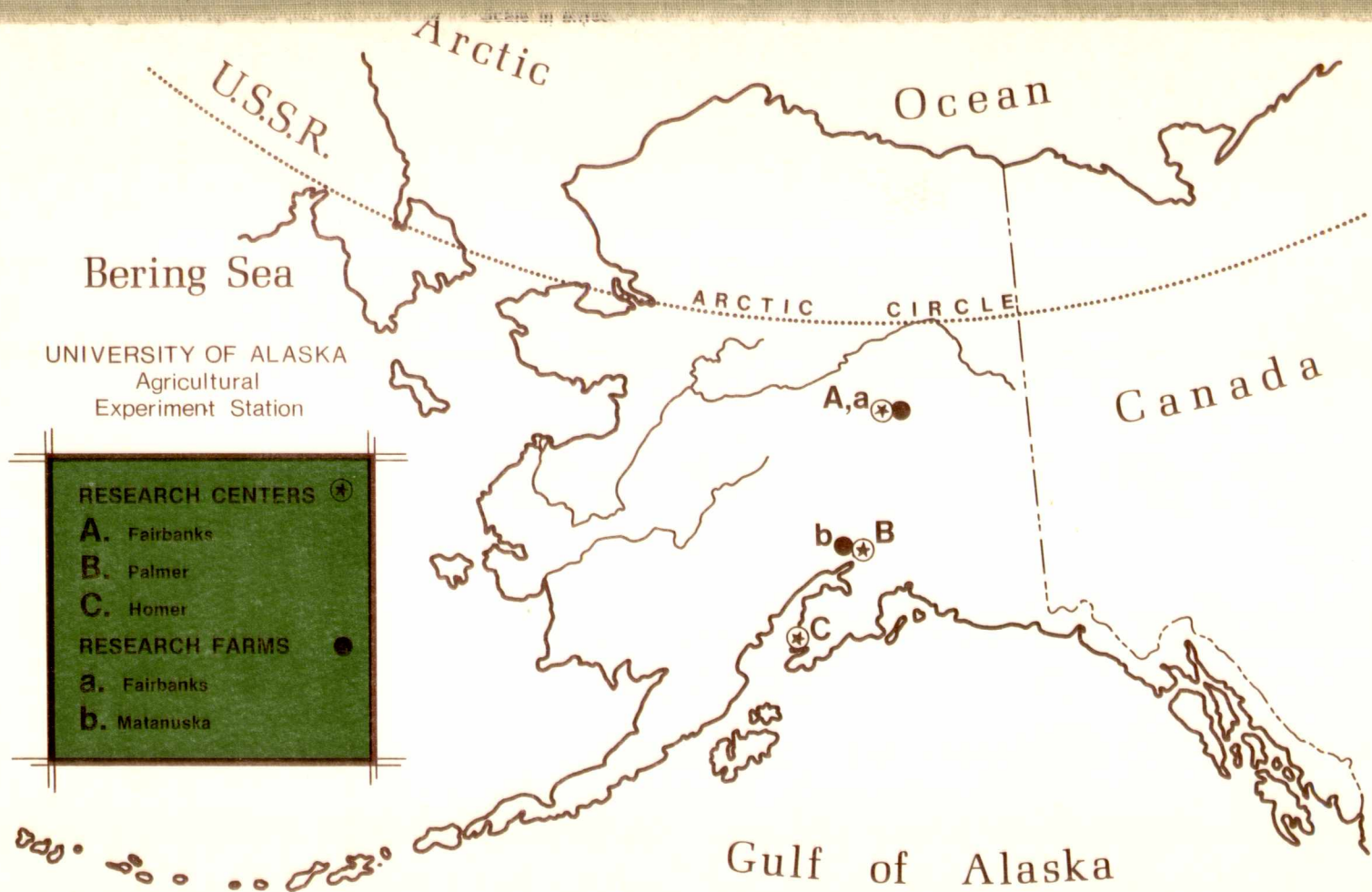
be well advised to begin with this group. The two exceptions, the Paisley and Backhouse hybrids, belong among the Martagon hybrids, so this is another group to try for hardy lilies.

Two groups of lilies which are almost certainly not hardy are the graceful Aurelian hybrids (trumpet lilies) and the spectacular Oriental hybrids (or Auratum hybrids). Yet these lilies are so beautiful that many gardeners will want to try growing them. It is possible to grow some Auralians as annuals, planting them in the spring and digging up the bulbs in the fall (after the foliage has died) to be stored over winter. There are several disadvantages to this method, namely that the bulbs may bloom very late or not at all, the bulbs will be gradually weakened

by this treatment, and some losses will occur in storage. Another way to grow the shorter members in these groups is in pots, but pot culture is beyond the scope of this publication.

### **Descriptions**

The lily cultivars and species described in the table on pages 4 and 5 have survived and bloomed for several years at the Agricultural Experiment Station at Fairbanks, Alaska. This list is by no means complete—there may be many other cultivars in the Asiatic group which are hardy. Since lily bulbs can represent a substantial investment, however, most gardeners will want to begin with varieties that have proved their hardiness.



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