

## What You Can Do To Make Your Easter Lilies Last

Leimone Waite, Master Gardener, April 26, 2019

**Q:** I received an Easter lily for Easter. Can I plant it out in my yard here in Redding?

**A:** The Easter lily is a very popular flower this time of year due to its mythological association with motherhood and the literature, poetry and art that speak of the beauty and majesty of the elegant white flowers. The lily is mentioned numerous times in the Bible, one of the most famous references being in Jesus Christ's Sermon on the Mount: "Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they toil not, neither do they spin; and yet ... Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these."

Easter Lilies will grow in Redding but they don't like the heat. They're much happier on the north coast of California or southern Oregon coast where 95 percent of all Easter lily bulbs have been grown since the 1940s.



The flower most synonymous with Easter is the beautiful Easter lily, regarded as a symbol of beauty, hope and life. (Photo: emer1940, Getty Images/iStockphoto)

According to John Erwin, a horticultural science professor at the University of Minnesota, the Easter lily is indigenous to the Japanese islands of Ryukyu, Okinawa, Oshima, Takeshima and Kawanabe. In its native environment, the Easter lily grows in humus deposits on coral rocks near the shore — far different then the baking heat of Redding.

Before you transplant, wait until the plant has stopped blooming and the leaves start to turn yellow, then plant it where it will have at least partial shade all day long, or morning sun only. The roots like to be cool, so mulch with some compost or bark after planting,

Keep the roots well-watered, even during our frequent winter droughts. Lilies never quite stop growing and don't like to dry out.



Nematodes - tiny worms that live in the soil - feed on organic matter in the ground, transfer nutrients and are important components of soil ecosystems. (Photo: Courtesy of Jim Knickelbine)

Before you plant you should know that they're quite disease- and nematode-prone.

Easter lilies have no natural resistance to nematodes and all attempts to breed in resistance have failed," said Lee Riddle, director of the Easter Lily Research Foundation in

Brookings, Oregon. "Without both soil treatment and in-furrow root treatment at planting, Easter lilies will die from nematode infestation: I mean dead foliage, dead stem, dead roots, dead bulb, end of story, dead plant."

After planting, your lily will not bloom again until next year. This can be as late as early summer. Easter lilies naturally bloom in June. Yours bloomed at Easter this year thanks to being forced in the nursery by giving it a couple of months of moist chill and before moving into to a warmer growing area where extra lighting is provided to induce flowering.



Close-up of Easter Lily flowers (Photo: Medioimages/Photodisc, Getty Images)

My recommendation is to enjoy the lily indoors and then compost it when it starts to die back. Think of it more as a long-lasting flower arrangement rather than a plant to use in your landscaping.

*The Shasta Master Gardeners Program can be reached by phone at 242-2219 or email [mastergardener@shastacollege.edu](mailto:mastergardener@shastacollege.edu). The gardener office is staffed by volunteers trained by the University of California to answer gardeners' questions using information based on scientific research.*