

Plant Wise

IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY
Extension and Outreach

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The Easter lily

There is no doubt that many of your homes are graced with the fragrant and lovely white trumpet-shaped flowers of an Easter Lily.

Native to the southern islands of Japan, 95 percent of Easter Lilies now come from an area along the border of California and Oregon. They can grow up to three feet tall and blossom from April to June, which makes them perfect for the Easter holiday.



But how can you enjoy your fragrant flower long after the holiday?

Here are the basic steps to caring for a potted Easter Lily.

Step 1: Unwrap your plant immediately once you get home. The decorative packaging they often come in, can waterlog the plant causing the roots to rot or deteriorate.

Step 2: Remove the anthers. The anthers are the tall stems that grow from the center of the bloom. Removal can prolong the life of the flower and prevent pollen from staining the pristine white petals.

Step 3: Find a bright spot for it to grow. Avoid any areas of your home with too much direct sunlight as this is sure to shorten their lifespan. Turn your plant every 2 to 3 days to keep it standing straight.

Step 4: Keep it cool. Be sure your plant is protected from any heat sources or vents and try to

keep your home between 60°F and 68°F.

Step 5: Water when the soil is dry to touch. Avoid over-watering or letting it sit in water but do not let it stay dry for a prolonged period of time either.

Step 6: Remove any fading flowers. Pruning any withering petals will help promote new growth.



(Removing the anthers)

How to Transfer Easter Lilies to the Garden

Transplant it outdoors once all danger of frost has passed and when the flower stops blooming. The plant needs to be in well-drained soil, just as it did when it was potted. To provide the needed drainage, add peat moss and perlite to rich organic soil.

Plant the lily bulbs, roots down, 3" inches beneath the surface of the soil and water. If planting more than one bulb, position them at least 12" inches apart. Cut back the stems once the plant appears dead. This will cause new growth to begin and possibly another bloom this summer. Next year, look for a June or July bloom.

Remember: all lilies are poisonous to both cats and dogs. If you have pets, keep them away from where pets can reach them!



Everything to Know About Mulch

Spring is the time to spruce up and prepare your flower beds. Mulch is good for your plants and a great labor saver. It reduces evaporation, slows weed growth, improves soil quality, and makes your gardens look more attractive. And more, it's inexpensive and easy to apply.



Wood chips and bark are the most common types of mulch colors, but you can even use stones to good effect.

In most cases, mulch greatly simplifies your gardening chores. Mulch includes a variety of materials that you use to cover the bare soil in your gardens. Most often you think of it as organic materials such as wood chips, cedar bark mulch, and compost, but it also includes materials like stone and gravel. Adding a layer of mulch pays off by;

Reducing water loss from the soil. It slows evaporation and improves water absorption when it rains or you turn on the sprinkler.

Slowing weed growth.

Improving soil quality. Organic types enrich the soil as they decompose.

Protecting plant roots from hot and cold temperature extremes and sudden fluctuations.

Adding color and texture as part of your overall garden design.

Organic mulch

Use organic mulches when possible, because they decompose and improve the soil as they break down.

You'll find a variety of mulches at your local nursery. But no one type of mulch does it all. Use an aged organic mulch (partially decomposed wood products) to improve the soil and encourage all-around plant growth. It will continue to decompose and add nutrients to the soil. It's often sold in bulk. Use fresh organic mulch (wood chips and bark) where you want to control weeds and improve appearance, such as around trees and shrubs. While organic, it hasn't begun to decompose and will last longer than aged mulch. It will also enrich the soil when it does decomposes.

Use stone to stabilize garden areas vulnerable to washout, for example, on hills and around downspouts. Or use it to improve the appearance of your garden.

Organic colored mulch

Organic mulch is colored with vegetable dyes. This adds contrast and interest to gardens. Most natural organic mulches will turn gray in about a year, depending on the amount of sunlight that hits them. Bright colors like red bark mulch might run a bit during a hard rain, but the color should wash off nearby walks. Colored mulches also tend to have finer textures, a characteristic that helps them mat together and stay in place on slopes. But it will need replenishing every two to three years.



Which mulch will last the longest?

Bark mulches consisting of large pieces will last longer than smaller bark and shredded-wood mulches. In general, pick a type with larger chunks, because it'll decompose more slowly. And choose bark-type mulches (such as pine bark nuggets) before shredded wood types (such as cedar bark mulch, cypress and hardwood). Keep in mind that mulch reduces maintenance but doesn't eliminate it. Again, organic mulches have to be replenished periodically, usually every two to three years.



Mulch as weed control?

Pull all weeds before mulching, then add at least a 4 inch layer to keep weed seeds from germinating.

Mulch won't stop weeds completely. Applied deep enough, it will prevent many weed seeds already in the soil from germinating and growing. But it won't stop weeds that have already rooted. Tough weeds like dandelions will push right through if you don't dig them out first. And more weed seeds will blow in and take root in the mulch. All mulch-covered gardens still require maintenance, though a lot less than if you don't use mulch.



How much mulch will you need?

You can easily calculate how much mulch you need by multiplying the length and width of the garden bed (in Feet) and dividing the result by 3. This will give you the volume you need in cubic feet (cu. ft.) to cover a bed 4 inches deep. The volume of mulch in a bag will be printed on the label. You may be surprised at how many bags you will need

Should I use landscape fabric under mulch?

Don't use fabric under organic mulches. It's better to let the mulch decompose and mix into the soil. Use fabric only under stones and gravel. It'll keep the rocks from sinking into the soil and make removal much easier if you want to change it later.



How to Grow Potatoes in the Garden

There are many methods of planting potatoes. Hills, trenches, straw bales, tubs and barrels. Today we are focusing on the traditional trench method in the garden. Here are a few tips on how to grow potatoes for a healthy and bountiful harvest.

When

Traditionally we plant our potatoes on Good Friday. But Good Friday never fall on the same week-end. So here are the basics. Potatoes may be planted as soon as the ground can be worked in the early spring, but potatoes will not begin to grow until the soil temperature has reached 45 °F. This is usually between the end of March and Mid-April, and Good Friday falls in this time span.

Where

Potatoes always do best in full sun. They are aggressively rooting plants, and will produce the best crop when planted in a light, loose, well-drained soil. Potatoes prefer a slightly acid soil with a PH of 5.0 to 7.0. Fortunately potatoes are very adaptable and will almost always produce a respectable crop, even when the soil conditions and growing seasons are less than perfect. Potatoes should be rotated in the garden on a 3 to 4 year rotation.

How

A week or two before your planting date, set your seed potatoes in an area where they will be exposed to light and temperatures between 60-70 degrees. This will begin the sprouting process. A day or two before planting, use a sharp, clean knife to slice the larger seed potatoes into smaller pieces. Each piece should be approximately 2 inches square, and must contain at least 1 or 2 eyes or buds



Plant smaller potatoes whole. A good rule of thumb is to plant potatoes whole if they are smaller in size than a golf ball. In a day or so your seed will form a thick callous over the cuts, which will help prevent rotting.

Planting

It seems potatoes are best grown in rows. To begin with, dig a trench that is 6-8 inches deep. Plant each piece of potato (cut side down, with the eyes pointing up) every 12-15 inches, with the rows spaced 3 feet apart. If your space is limited or if you would like to grow only baby potatoes, you can decrease the spacing between plants.



To begin with only fill the trench in with 4 inches of soil. Let the plants start to grow and then continue to fill in the trench and even mound the soil around the plants as they continue to grow. Prior to

planting, always make sure to cultivate the soil one last time. This will remove any weeds and will loosen the soil and allow the plants to become established more quickly.

Watering

Keep your potato vines well-watered throughout the summer, especially during the period when the plants are flowering and immediately following the flowering stage. During this flowering period the plants are creating their tubers and a steady water supply is crucial to good crop outcome. Potatoes do well with 1-2 inches of water or rain per week. When the foliage turns yellow and begins to die back, discontinue watering. This will help start the curing process of the potatoes for harvest time.

Harvesting

Baby potatoes typically can be harvested 2-3 weeks after the plants have finished flowering. Gently dig around the plants to remove potatoes for fresh eating, being careful not to be too intrusive. Try to remove the biggest new potatoes and leave the smaller ones in place so they can continue to grow. Only take what you need for immediate eating. Homegrown new potatoes are a luxury and should be used the same day that they are dug. Potatoes that are going to be kept for storage should not be dug until 2-3 weeks after the foliage dies back. Carefully dig potatoes with a sturdy fork and if the weather is dry, allow the potatoes to lay in the field, unwashed, for 2-3 days. This curing step allows the skins to mature and is essential for good storage. If the weather during harvest is wet and rainy, allow the potatoes to cure in a dry protected area like a garage or covered porch.



Storage

If you are lucky enough to have an underground root cellar, that is the perfect place. If not, try to find a storage area that is well ventilated, dark, and cool. The ideal temperature is between 35 and 40 degrees. Keep in mind that some varieties are better keepers than others. Varieties like Red Gold

and Rose Gold are best used in the fall, and others like Russets are exceptional keepers.

Late Fall Crop

If you want to extend storage times you can plant a second crop as late as June 15 and harvest the potatoes as late as possible. Potatoes can tolerate a light frost, but you should provide some frost protection for the plants if you know that a hard, late season freeze is coming.

Recommended for Iowa

'Red Norland' is an early maturing red variety that produces oblong, smooth potatoes with shallow eyes. They are excellent boiled or mashed, but only fair when baked.

'Russet Norkotah' is an early season russet variety that produces blocky, oblong potatoes. It is an excellent baking potato.

'Yukon Gold' is an early season yellow-fleshed variety. They are excellent baked, boiled or mashed. The potatoes also store well.

'Superior' is an early to mid-season variety with round to oblong tubers and medium deep eyes. The potatoes are very good baked, boiled or mashed. It is resistant to scab.



'Goldrush' is a mid-season variety that produces oblong to oval tubers with a russet skin and white flesh. Baking quality is very good.

'Katahdin' is a late maturing white variety that produces smooth, round, shallow-eyed tubers. It is excellent for baking.

'Kennebec' is a late maturing white variety with block-shaped tubers and shallow eyes. Cooking quality is excellent.

'Red Pontiac' is a late maturing red variety. Potatoes are oblong with deep eyes. It produces high yields with many large tubers. Table quality is only fair. Storage quality is very good.





Orange Glazed Salmon

YIELD: Serves 4 PREP TIME: 5 minutes
 COOK TIME: 25 minutes Cast Iron Skillet

Ingredients:

4 (6 oz.) salmon filets
 2 tablespoons avocado oil
 2 oranges (1 juiced, 1 sliced)
 2 cloves garlic (minced)
 2 tablespoons honey
 2 tablespoons tamari
 1 teaspoon thyme (finely chopped)
 Salt and pepper to taste
 1/2 teaspoon arrowroot flour
 1 teaspoon water

Instructions:

Pat salmon dry with paper towel, then season with salt and pepper.
 In a cast iron skillet, heat the avocado oil on medium-high.
 Add salmon and cook for 3-4 minutes on each side. While salmon is cooking, make an arrowroot slurry by stirring together the arrowroot flour and water. Set aside for later.
 Once salmon is cooked, transfer to a plate. Turn down the heat to medium-low and saute the minced garlic in the pan for 30 seconds. Add the orange juice, honey, tamari, thyme and arrowroot slurry. Whisk the ingredients together for 1-2 minutes or until slightly thickened.
 Add the salmon back to the pan and garnish with the orange slices. Spoon the glaze over salmon before serving.

Note: The glaze will continue to thicken as it cools. It is recommended to use a cast iron skillet to ensure the salmon doesn't stick to the pan.



Do You Remember When?

Years ago when you were a youth, you and your brother got on the phone, which was a party line, and you called the neighbors to ask them, "Is your refrigerator running?" When they replied "Yes it is" you came back with "Well you better go catch it!" Then in that fun filled voice you and your sibling would yell "April Fool's!"

To this day, everyone is always trying to come up with a good April Fool's Day joke. As long as both parties can laugh, all is good!



Did you ever think about where 'April Fool's Day' came from? The term "All Fools" was probably meant as a deliberate stab at "All Saints Day" (November 1st) and "All Souls Day" (November 2nd). Although the origin of playing practical jokes and pranks on this day is hazy, many believe it may go back as far as the 16th century. At that time, "New Year's Day" was March 25, with a week of partying and exchanging gifts until April 1st. In 1582, the Gregorian calendar moved "New Year's Day" back to January 1st. Those who forgot or refused to honor the new calendar were teasingly called "April Fools!" Another interesting thing is according to Folklore, if it thunders on April Fool's Day, it brings good crops for farmers.

Wishing all of you a Fun Filled April Fool's Day!



March UP COMMING EVENTS

- **March 1, through July 1, 2021** Master Gardener Training applications open. Classes will be virtual. Application deadline is July 1, 2021. Follow the link below to apply.

<https://www.extension.iastate.edu/mastergardener/application-opens-2021-master-gardener-training>



- **April 5, 2021** Registration opens for the "International Master Gardener Conference". It will be virtual this year. It will be held September 12-17, 2021 Follow these two links for more information.
[About](#) | [Registration opens April 5](#)

- **April 6, 2021**, 6:00pm Spring Fever Symposium Seminar, Tuesday evening Participate in the virtual spring fever symposium webinar by Karen Chapman on ideas for gardens of all budgets and sizes. Follow the link below.
https://iowaarboretum.org/event/spring-fever-symposium-2/?instance_id=954

- **April 24, 2021** Saturday, 10am to 12:30pm Become a citizen scientist and an active conservationist through the Iowa Butterfly Survey Network (IBSN) with this training from our entomology staff. Learn butterfly survey techniques to monitor populations, provide data to identify potential threats, show effectiveness of habitat restoration, and give an annual snapshot of butterfly population health in Iowa.
Pre-registration is REQUIRED for this in person program, along with masks covering nose and mouth. Free for everyone - no admission necessary. Follow these two links for more information and registration.
[Butterfly Survey Network Training \(Ames\)](#)

<https://www.reimangardens.com/collections/insects/iowa-butterfly-survey-network/ibsn-events/>

- **May 8, 2021** – 8:30 to 11:00 am. Master Gardener Plant sale, Glenwood Iowa. Rain or Shine



March GARDENING TO DO LIST



- Finish cleaning off the garden, asparagus, rhubarb and your flower beds.
- Plant potatoes, shallots and onion sets. Sow cool weather vegetables like peas, lettuce, radishes, carrots and beets.
- Spruce up your flower beds with fresh mulch.
- Begin fertilizing your house plants.
- Start making a list and gathering supplies for summer canning.
- Divide clump perennials, such as Daylilies and Hostas.
- Remove mulch from your garlic and strawberries.

- Begin mowing your lawn and seeding any bare patches.



Resources for Horticulture information Iowa State University Publications

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| RG 209 | Organic Mulches |
| SUL 12 | Using Mulch |
| PM 874 | Starting Garden Transplants at Home |
| PM 534 | Planting and harvesting times for Garden vegetables |
| PM 814 | Where to put your Vegetable Garden |
| HORT 3087 | Cole Crops |
| HORT 3086 | Potatoes |
| HORT 3085 | Onions |
| RG 319 | When to Divide Perennials |
| RG 215 | Gardening in Iowa Zones |
| PM 607 | Suggested Vegetable Varieties for the Garden |

Horticulture Publications on-line

<https://www.extension.iastate.edu/store/ListCategories>



ISU Hotline Links and Numbers

Hotlines available for all

Iowa Concern 800-447-1985 Financial questions, legal education, stress counseling, crisis/disaster resources and referral (24 hrs - all days)

Beginning Farmer Center 877-BFC-1999 Program to match beginning and retiring farmers (8 a.m. to 5 p.m.)

Teen Line 800-443-8336 Personal and health-related information and referral (24 hrs - all days)

Iowa 2-1-1 211 Resource referral for housing, health, food, family, transportation, employment, education, and legal assistance (24 hrs - all days)

Hot lines available for Iowa Residents Only

AnswerLine Toll-free: 800-262-3804 Local: 515-296-5883

Questions relating to home and family (9 am-noon & 1-4 pm)

Iowa Healthy Families 800-369-2229 Health information and referral (24 hrs - all days)

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