



THIS WEEK:

BULBS FOR SUMMMER

» DEGREE OF DIFFICULTY

This is one of the easiest garden projects you can do. On a scale of one to 10, I would rate the degree of difficulty as a 3. The biggest challenge is physical: You need to kneel and bend to make holes in which to pop the bulbs. However, you can also grow most summer-flowering bulbs in containers, something that can be done without the strain of bending and digging.

» COST

Packages of lily bulbs, the most popular kind of summer-flowering bulb, range in price from \$4 to \$9, depending on type and rarity. For about \$35, you can buy an assortment of lilies plus packages of other bulbs such as acidanthera, eucomis and gladiolus.

» TIME

You will spend more time shopping for these bulbs than you will planting them. It takes only a few minutes to plant them, a little longer if you have to prepare a container.

» WHAT CAN GO WRONG

Not much. This is about as foolproof as gardening gets. The biggest mistake you are likely to make is to plant bulbs in too much shade in ground that is too boggy and slow-draining. Good drainage and at least six hours of sunshine are essential for success.

Plant now for hot-weather rewards

This is one of the easiest and most rewarding gardening projects you can do. Simply take a bulb, dig a hole, plop the bulb into the hole, cover it over, and walk away.

- Lilies are easily the most popular of all the spring-planted, summer-flowering bulbs.

- All the newest and best cultivars are in stores in the spring. Which is why most gardeners do this in March/April rather than September/October.

- To create a continuous and seamless progression of blooms throughout summer, you need to pick up lily bulbs in each of the key categories: Asiatic lilies are the earliest to flower in midsummer, followed by Trumpet and Tiger lilies. Oriental lilies are the last ones to bloom in late summer.

- If you have allergies, you should grow pollen-free Kiss lilies in a container.

- LA hybrids are a mix of early blooming Asiatics and Easter lily (*Lilium longiflorum*). OT lilies are a mix of Oriental and Trumpet lilies.

- Some will soar 1.2 m to 1.8 m (4 to 6 feet), others will only grow 45 to 50 cm (16 to 20 inches).



Stargazer is a vibrant variety of Oriental lily.

- Find a spot in your garden that gets at least six hours of sunshine a day. The soil should be moist, but well-draining.

- Once you have decided on your spot, place your kneeling on the ground, get down and use your bulb planter to push into the earth, making a hole 15 to 20 cm (6 to 8 inches deep).

- Lilies not only produce roots from the bottom of the bulb, but also from the bottom of the stem on which the flower will appear. It is a common mistake not to plant bulbs deeply enough.

- Place the bulb in the hole, back fill with the soil still held in the bulb-planter. Pull a little more soil over the spot to finish. See my video,

showing all this and more at www.vancouver.sun.com

- Tall lilies will require staking later on. You can do it just before they bloom or at time of planting, if you don't mind looking at the stake. Be careful when you stake, though, that you don't damage the bulb.

- The pineapple lily (*Eucomis bicolor*) produces a beautiful pineapple-like flower and makes a great container plant. Being a little frost-tender, these bulbs are best grown in pots so they can be moved into a frost-free place over winter.

- The peacock gladiolus (*Acidanthera*) is another one of my favourite summer-flowering bulbs. They have fragrant white flowers with a chocolate-purple blotch in the centre.

- Gladiolus is an old-fashioned favourite in the summer-flowering bulb category. These are technically corms, but sold as bulbs. Plant them in clusters of five and seven, in repeat plantings, once every two weeks, to create a continual sequence of blooms. Some grow 1.5 m (6 feet), others such as the Tiny Tot hybrids grow only 60 cm (2 feet), making them great for containers.

» WHAT YOU NEED

A bulb-planter, ideally one with a quick-release handle, is useful for planting lilies. You can buy one for less than \$10, but you can use it again in the fall to plant your spring-flowering bulbs and you will get many years of use out of it, so it's a good investment. It is best to use a lightweight container soil mix if you are planting bulbs in a pot. A kneeling pad can take the pain out of kneeling down during planting. Gloves will protect your hands and keep them clean. You might want to add a wooden stake at time of planting to support tall lilies

» MATERIAL SOURCES

Most garden centres offer a broad selection of summer-flowering bulbs all spring. Selection is always best the moment bulbs arrive in March, but stores usually continue offering a generous range through to May.

» SUGGESTED CULTIVARS

'Lollipop', 'Landini' and 'Navona' are all top Asian lilies. 'Regale', 'African Queen' and 'Pink Perfection' are popular Trumpet lilies. 'Casa Blanca' and 'Stargazer' are flawless Orientals. 'Copacabana' is a mix of pink and white pineapple lilies (*Eucomis bicolor*). *Acidanthera bicolor* (peacock gladiolus) is fragrant.