Save Easter lilies and plant them outdoors

K-State horticulture expert shares tips to help sometimes-fickle lilies thrive

By Taylor Jamison, K-State Research and Extension news service


“Though lilies are not reliably hardy in Kansas, many gardeners have success if they follow a few simple rules,” Upham said.

Upham’s tips for success include:

- **Remove the flower stalk.** The lily will use energy to produce seed from the stalk. To keep the lily flourishing, remove its stalk after the flowers have faded.

- **Take care of the lily inside until frost has passed.** Take care of it as usual. “Keep soil moist but never waterlogged,” Upham said. “Don’t allow water to sit in the tray. Continue to fertilize.”

- **Move the pot outside when the weather is warmer.** Upham said to sink the pot into the soil until up to its brim. Placing it in dappled shade will reduce the amount of watering required. Continue to water and fertilize the lily. After the top growth has died down, the lily is ready to be fully planted in the ground soil.

- **Transplant the lily to a well-dug hole in a sunny location.** After choosing a spot that receives enough sunlight, the key to a healthy lily is good drainage. “Till or dig the soil six inches deep and add three inches of peat moss,” Upham said.
“Mix the soil and peat moss together. This will form a berm that should drain very well.”

- **Plant deep enough.** Upham recommends planting the lily bulbs six inches deep and 12-18 inches apart. Water well and add mulch to conserve moisture. New growth may not appear until later in the summer, or the plant may stay dormant until the following spring, so remain patient.

- **In the fall, cover the plant for winter.** Straw, pine needles, wood chips, or other types of mulch can be spread over the lilies in order to protect it in the cold winter. “Use four inches of straw or three inches of any of the other materials,” Upham said.

- **Once spring comes again, uncover the lily and begin care.** Once the mulch has been uncovered from the lilies, new growth can emerge. Upham recommends performing a soil test in order to best fertilize your plants.

Upham and his colleagues in K-State’s Department of Horticulture and Natural Resources produce a weekly Horticulture Newsletter with tips for maintaining home landscapes. The newsletter is available to view online or can be delivered by email each week.

Interested persons can also send their garden- and yard-related questions to Upham at wupham@ksu.edu, or contact your local K-State Research and Extension office.

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**FOR PRINT PUBLICATIONS:** Links used in this story:
K-State Research and Extension statewide offices, https://www.ksre.k-state.edu/about/statewide-locations.html

K-State Horticulture Newsletter, https://hnr.k-state.edu/extension/information/newsletters/index.html

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