

Danny L. Cain
Walker County Extension Coordinator
1501 North Airport Road
Jasper AL 35504
(205)221-3392

For Publication in *The Daily Mountain Eagle*

Each and every year it seems like more and more people enjoy cut flowers or flowering potted plants in and around their homes. Potted plants and cut flowers can add color and brightness to any room of your home, and some even have very deep symbolic meanings as well. Such is true of one very common plant that we see around this time of year...the Easter lily.

While most flowering potted plants as well as cut flower arrangements have a limited life, a little proper care can help you to get the most enjoyment possible from your flower purchase.

Here is a little bit of history on the Easter lily for those of you like me who enjoy history and trivia. The Easter lily actually grows naturally along the coastal regions of Okinawa. In their native home in Japan, they are commonly referred to as “gun lilies” because of the shape of their flowers. Japan closed its borders to trade with the western world in the 1600’s and 1700’s, so the West was only introduced to the Easter lily in the early 1800’s. They are quite attractive and I’m fond of the Easter lily, so better late than never I guess. For many people the white flower of the Easter lily symbolizes purity and newness of life. Whatever your interest in Easter Lilies, they make a great seasonal addition to your home.

Easter lilies bloom white with yellow anthers. You can actually remove the anthers if you like. Removing the anthers will actually increase the life of your Easter lily a bit. Be careful as you remove them, however, because you can damage the delicate bloom of your lily and the anthers can stain light colored clothing and upholstery. The foliage of your Easter lily is waxy and thin. The pointed green leaves emerge directly out of the stem of the lily.

The lily’s flowers are large trumpet-shaped flowers that radiate from all sides of the plant at the top. Your lily will typically produce from three to eight blooms each year. It is very difficult to get your lily to re-flower, so it is usually best to simply discard the spent plant after the flowers have faded and died off.

Here are a few pointers that will help you to extend the life of your Easter lily now that you have it at home.

Light – Bright but indirect sunlight is best for your lily. Too much direct sunlight will cause the blooms to fade and too little sunlight can cause premature defoliation. Store your plant indoors in indirect sunlight (for example in front of a curtain) or on a window ledge. Display your lily in low light areas for brief periods of time and return it to the brighter area for holding.

Water – Water your lily only as the plant needs it, that is to say when the potting media becomes visibly dry. Also note that this does not mean the potting media will resemble the desert soil from Death Valley. Irrigate with enough water to allow some to come out the bottom of the pot. If you allow the potting media to become too dry it will be very difficult to get water to soak into it again. I also recommend removing any plastic, foil, or other covering around the pot as these can prevent excess water from draining.

Fertilizer – Actually fertilizer will not be needed for your lilies. Again, this is because you will only be displaying your lily for a couple weeks while it is in bloom.

Temperature – Lilies will survive best at a temperature that ranges between 60 and 80 degrees. Also store your lily away from areas that receive drafts of cold or hot air.

Maintenance – Remove all dead leaves and faded blooms from your Easter lily and keep the foliage dry to prevent possible disease problems.

It is very unfortunate in my opinion, but Easter lily cannot be grown outdoors in Alabama. It is also very difficult to force them to flower again even under good conditions. Enjoy your lily now while it is in bloom during this Easter season and as soon as the blooms fade simply replace it with one of many choices of spring and summer flowering plants or even a cut flower arrangement from your own landscape.