

PLANT CORNER

Welcome to another year of the Plant Corner, a series of profiles of STAR PERFORMERS among perennial garden plants from the folks at Chaska Farm & Garden.

Lilium LA Hybrid 'Fangio'



We talk a lot about form and texture to create a beautiful perennial garden mostly because it is the hardest and least sexy part. If you don't do your homework, clean your room, and eat your vegetables, no treats. Bright color is a treat even if the blooms last only for a short while.

Lilies are the best and the brightest of summer bloomers, and they ask for very little care. I will only try to make limited sense of this tribe of plants here. Daylilies with their grass-like, basal leaves and leafless flower stalks are to themselves a very useful and popular group. Otherwise noteworthy are the Oriental Hybrids with their garishly large blooms and the Asiatics, more moderately sized and hardier with a much broader color range. Both Orientals and Asiatics have leaves all the way up the flower stalk like the old-fashioned Tiger Lilies.

We are very impressed with a new category of Lily Hybrids called LA Hybrids. They are much like the Asiatics but sturdier with larger, heavier, thicker flower petals that take more abuse and hold up better than the Asiatics. Their flower colors are very bright, clean and pure. 'Fangio' is pure cherry-red. The flowers are out-facing, open but the petals not reflexed (curled back) and without freckles. Individual flowers are 4-5 in. wide and are borne in clusters atop 50 in. leafed stems, lasting 4-7 days depending on the vagaries of weather.

The LA Lilies, like the Asiatics and Orientals, belong in any garden, they take some shade and occupy a very small footprint, being tall and vertical. Put them in the mid or back of a border for occasional yelps of color. If you plant enough you will have them for cuts, but remove the messy pollen-bearing stamens as the flowers open. After the blooms are spent clip off the seed forming tops, but leave as much green leaf as possible to rebuild the root bulbs for next year's flower production. Bulbs can be planted in spring or potted plants even in bloom can be planted anytime. The bulb should be set relatively deep, at least twice as deep as they are wide, into well-drained, fertile soil.

One last note here on varmints. Deer do like to feed on lily buds and flowers, they are a special treat for them, but that leaves you without your treat!

We will carry LA Hybrid varieties potted in bud and bloom come summer.

-Tom

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