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Easter Lilies in the Garden

Easter lilies with their sweet fragrance and white trumpet blooms are a part of our resurrection celebration each spring. They are forced to bloom in time for Easter, but Easter lilies may be planted in the garden to enjoy year after year. When planted in the garden in East Texas they will bloom in April or May.

Easter lilies planted in the garden are extra special to me. I had a friend in a local nursing home, whom I visited once or twice a month for several years. We shared chocolate chip cookies and coca-cola while she entertained me with stories of teaching school in East Texas during the depression. She was also interested in hearing about my family and activities, so we became good friends. One year after Easter when the lily she had received had finished blooming she gave it to me to plant in my garden. The next spring that lily bloomed in my garden on the day she died. When I see Easter lilies blooming in my garden each spring I think of my dear friend Louise.

To care for your lily during the Easter season keep the soil moist but don't allow the pot to sit in water. Place it in bright light but not in direct sun, keeping the room temperature on the cool side. When a flower opens remove the yellow anthers to prolong the bloom, and to prevent staining of table linens and clothing. Keep the plant looking its best by removing shriveled flowers.

After the plant has finished blooming plant the Easter lily in your flower garden. It enjoys morning sun and afternoon shade. As the old saying goes, "Lilies like their feet

in the shade and their heads in the sun.” The soil should be enriched with organic matter, kept moist and with good drainage. Bulb food may be added to the planting area, following the package instructions. As the old foliage dies trim it back to about three inches. New growth will emerge. Later in the summer the Easter lily will become dormant and all the foliage will disappear. In January the lily will emerge from the ground, and it will bloom in April and May. Enjoy!