

# Easter Lily Survey

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A few weeks before last Easter, we asked the County Agricultural Agents, in 7 of the major growing areas of New York, to distribute a questionnaire to their lily growers. The purpose of the survey was to obtain cultural information about the lily crop grown for Easter in the state. We hoped to be able to pin-point some of the problems that are encountered by the growers in order to help direct our future research, and see if our present recommendations are being followed. There was enough interesting information given in this survey to make us feel there would be interest in a summary.

The number of growers reporting was very good. The questionnaires were returned from 44 growers, and they grew 136,300 bulbs. We estimate this to be about half the number grown in the state. Approximately 75% of these bulbs were grown in the two Long Island counties.

## Varietal Preference

The variety Ace was preferred by 57% of the growers and accounted for 56% of the total number of bulbs grown. Croft was preferred by 21% of the growers and accounted for 43% of the total number of bulbs grown. The remaining 1% was made up of Georgia, Erabu, Estate and Olympia.

## Bulb Size

The following shows the various bulb sizes and the percentage of each size:

ACE	
Bulb size (circumference in inches)	Percentage
6-7	30
7-8	37
8-9	27
9-10	5
10-up	1

  

CROFT	
Bulb size (circumference in inches)	Percentage
7-8	13
8-9	58
9-up	29

In general, the bulb size for Ace ranged from 8-9 and down, whereas the bulb size for Croft ranged from 8-9 and up. This fact should be kept in mind when considering the report on height and flower number. All of our work has indicated that the larger the bulb, the taller the plant, and the greater the flower number.

We would like to thank the following County Agricultural Agents and the growers for their assistance in obtaining this information: Robert Brewster, Suffolk; Harry Fries, Nassau; Robert Gambino, Oneida; Carl Gortzig, Erie; Kirkwood Personius, Monroe; Richard Runge, Westchester; and Charles Williams, Chemung.

## Pre-Treatment

The majority of the growers reported the only pre-treatment of the bulbs was pre-cooling by the jobbers. One grower trialed cold framing, one used a cool shed, and another a cool garage.

We were a little disappointed with the answers to this question. It was hoped that a few more growers with cold frames would have tried this method of handling. We have shown in our work over the past years, that cold frame-grown plants will have a higher bud count (N.Y.S.F.G. Bul. 192).

## Planting Date

The earliest planting date was October and the latest was mid-January. A majority of the bulbs were planted before December 15. There was no indication as to a difference in planting date between Croft and Ace.

## Growing Temperature

The variations in the answers to this question were very large, ranging from 40° to 80°F. The low temperatures were used to hold the plants back, whereas the high temperatures were used to speed up development. The general growing temperature was 55-60° nights and 70° days.

## Timing

Only 43% of the growers reported that they were satisfied with their timing. In other words, approximately 57% of the growers were dissatisfied with their timing, and of these 36% said they were early, 16% reported that they were late and 5% had portions that were both early and late.

Timing appears to be one of the major problems. This is strange because our work has shown that lilies can be quite accurately timed (N.Y.S.F.G. Bul. 179). We time our crops by careful control of temperature. Reviewing the surveys, we noticed that the question on temperature had the greatest range and vaguest answers. It must be remembered that lilies are grown through a rather difficult time of the year (that is, for accurate temperature control). They are started when the weather is extremely cold and, in many years, end in a period when day temperatures, at least, are difficult to control.

We feel that a major reason for poor timing is poor temperature control.

## Height

Ace varied in height from 8-30" with a majority being 18-20" tall. Croft varied in height from 10-30" with a majority being 24-30" tall. It would appear that Croft is the taller grower; however, if bulb sizes are considered, recall that a major portion of the Croft bulbs were larger than the Ace.

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Another interesting observation was that 77% of the growers were satisfied with the height of their plants. Only one grower reported his plants were too tall, while 7 felt that their plants were too short.

Most of the growers reported no special treatments were used to control height. There were, however, a wide variety of methods used by those growers who did report a treatment for height control, including lights, phosfon, cloth along the side of the bench, spacing and watering.

### Flower Number

The lowest bud count reported on Ace was 4 and the highest 9. Most growers indicated 5-6 flowers on a 7-8" bulb. The lowest bud count on Croft was 3 and the highest 9. Again, most growers reported 5-6 flowers on an 8-9" bulb.

We have observed in our work that size for size, Ace will produce more flowers (N.Y.S.F.G. Bul. 192). This was also indicated by the results of this survey.

### Bud Blast

About 75% of the growers reported no difficulty with bud blast. The other 25% reported from less than 1% up to 25%. The highest figure was reported by a grower with Georgia lilies.

### Root Rot

Half of the growers reported no root rot and the other half said they had some root rot, but did not report a serious problem. It must be noted again, that more than half of the bulbs grown were Ace and this variety appears to be more "resistant" to root rot.

### Summary

However dangerous it is to draw conclusions from surveys, we should make some attempt.

The majority of the growers in the state are growing Ace. Most growers are satisfied with the pre-cooling of lilies, plant them before December 15, and use a 55-60° night temperature and 70° day temperature. Timing appeared to be the major problem facing the lily grower. He was generally satisfied with height and flower number, and was not particularly bothered with bud blast or root rot.