

TIMING EASTER LILIES BY COUNTING LEAVES

Jay S. Koths
Extension Floriculturist

You can time your lily crop more precisely. Sacrificing a few plants and determining how many leaves remain to unfold per week until buds show, will provide the necessary information.

All leaves and buds are formed in Easter lilies by the time they are 4-6" high. For 1972, they should be this tall by January 17-24.

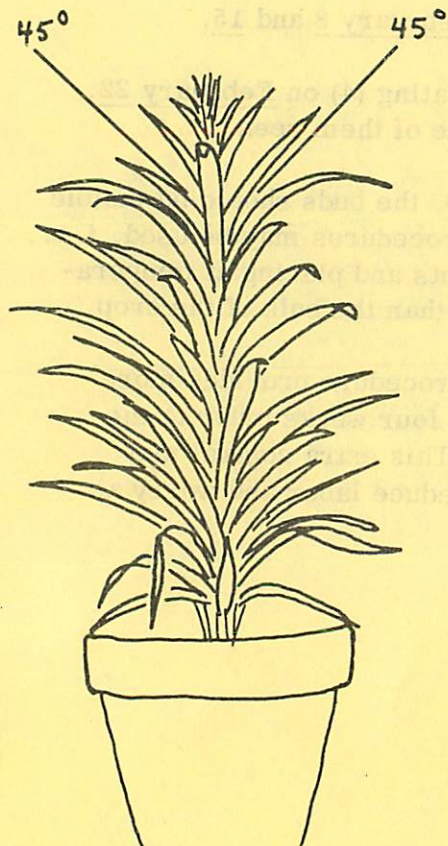
Procedure for 1972:

1. Select 10 plants per lot of given size and source (a minimum of five for smaller lots) and count the number of unfolded leaves (from 45⁰) by sacrificing plants on January 24. A magnifying glass and needle will facilitate counting the smallest leaves.

2. Divide the estimated leaf number by five (weeks) to give the number of leaves that are expected to unfold each week, as follows:

If the number of leaves remaining
 unfolded on January 24 is: 40 50 60 70 80

The number of leaves that
 should unfold by 1/31 is: 8 10 12 14 16
 2/7 16 20 24 28 32
 2/14 24 30 36 42 48
 2/21 32 40 48 56 64
 (Buds visible) 2/28 40 50 60 70 80



As lily leaves
 unfold beyond
 a 45° angle,
 count weekly
 to determine
 rate of growth,
 then compare
 this rate with
 the predicted
 number.

3. Select and mark comparison plants in the greenhouse from each lot of bulbs, using at least as many pots as sacrificed. Some growers have used a paper punch to indicate the last leaves to unfold to a 45° angle, others place a string around the stalk above the counted leaves.

4. On January 31, count the leaves that have unfolded on the comparison plants since January 24. If this number is less than the estimated number that should have unfolded, increase the temperature accordingly. If greater, decrease heat.

5. Repeat (4) on February 8 and 15.

6. Along with repeating (4) on February 22, buds may be felt, some of them seen.

7. On February 29, the buds should be visible so that usual timing procedures may be used, i. e., grading individual plants and placing at temperatures higher or lower than the bulk of the crop.

The leaf counting procedure provides more critical timing for the four weeks prior to the appearance of buds. This extra control may improve quality and reduce labor and worry as Easter approaches.