

Virtual Hortlandia 2020

The Lily Garden

www.thelilygarden.com

For the final article in the Virtual Hortlandia 2020 series, Joanne Fuller interviewed Niels VanNoort and edited the conversation for this article.

Niels, The Lily Garden sells so many great lilies, what are some of the best?

Well, of course Liliium 'Scheherazade' is one of the most beloved lilies ever bred. It was Judith's first "Orienpet" hybrid-- a cross between an Oriental Lily and a Trumpet Lily. People cannot believe you can grow a lily that gets seven plus feet tall and doesn't need a stake. The scent on a sunny day is fantastic. Liliium 'Silk Road' is one of our most popular lilies. It has huge white flowers with pink throats. It is also tall and strong. People love Liliium 'Time Zone' with raspberry-rose flowers with a center white star. It too is very fragrant. Many of the Orienpet type lilies get taller and stronger over time. We sell larger sized bulbs, so gardeners get good bloom the first year.

How did you end up at the Lily Garden?

I grew up in Holland where my dad had a perennial and bulb nursery. I studied Horticulture in college, did an internship in the Northwest with Van Der Salm Farms. After I graduated, they gave me a job.

The Lily Garden was started by Judith Freeman in 1979. Judith is a master lily hybridizer, and the Lily Garden introduced her wonderful lilies to gardeners. I've known Judith forever. Through our wholesale bulb business at Van Der Salm Farms, we have been growing bulbs for the Lily Garden. Three years ago, Judith decided to focus on hybridizing. So, we took over the business end of things, and she is still breeding great lilies.

I love Liliium 'Last Dance,' but I notice it's not available right now. Will you offer it again?

L. 'Last Dance' is one of Judith's favorite lilies too. The clear yellow color in downward facing flowers that bloom later in the lily season are very special. Unfortunately, some of our neighbor's cows got into the lily fields and trampled some of our varieties. Only a couple of bulbs of L. 'Last Dance' survived. We have sent the bulbs into tissue culture and hope to be able to offer L. 'Last Dance' again in a few years.

What are your personal favorites?

I love Martagon Lilies. The small recurved flowers that just get better every year are a lovely addition to the garden. The Lily Garden was offering only five varieties a few years ago. This fall, I hope to offer fifteen varieties of Liliium martagon. One thing people need to remember about growing Martagon Lilies, is never expect them to bloom the first year. Most often that first year, they will put out a little growth and then flower the next year. Martagons are the only lilies we don't guarantee to bloom the year you plant them.

What else is new this fall?

We expanded our website and discontinued the printed catalogue. For many people, it was sad to see the catalogue go. But, printing catalogues is very expensive, so we were limited to the number of offerings that would fit in a reasonably sized catalogue. On the web, we have no

limitations -- we can offer an infinite variety of bulbs with pictures of everything. So, we can list every lily available, even if we have small quantities. We will also be offering bulbs on consignment from hobbyist hybridizers across the country. Our customers will have access to a lot of new options.

Do you have advice for gardeners planting lily bulbs?

Always plant lilies in well-draining soil which will not have standing water at any time. Don't plant them too close together. They want the air circulation to keep the leaves dry. Also, try to water in a way that the soil gets water but the leaves don't. And plant them at the recommended depth-- don't 'fudge' on the depth. The bulbs we sell are big enough to grow and flower the first year. If they get hit by a late frost, they will die back and they won't flower. But they are not dead. They should come back and flower the next year.

The Lily Garden offers Crocosmias as well. Do you have some you recommend?

Crocosmia 'Adriana' is a very reliable grower with tangerine flowers that arch out of well-behaved clumps. It flowers for a long season. C. Diablito is the same color as C. 'Lucifer' but it is smaller, so it doesn't flop. Crocosmia 'Sharona' has unusually colored blooms that are coral almost pink. It is very upright and grows to only about three feet tall. Unfortunately, we only offer Crocosmias for sale in Spring, so gardeners will have to wait till 2021 to try these.

How do gardeners shop from the Lily Garden right now?

You can order any time from our website at www.thelilygarden.com. We are offering a 10% discount for Hardy Plant Society of Oregon members. Just enter "HPSO" in the discount code space when purchasing. However, we are finished shipping for spring. So, any orders now will be shipped this fall. By mid-July, the website should have all of our Fall 2020 offerings listed.