



Were you the lucky recipient of a wonderful, and probably, gorgeous, container of spring flowering bulbs or maybe you have a lovely fragrant lily that is looking a bit tired of the indoors? Now that the blooms have faded you may be wondering what you can do to prolong that enjoyment. It's quite simple, as long as the plants are hardy for our area.

Let's start with the early season gifts of tulips, daffodils, paper whites, and hyacinth. The general rule is similar to those bulbs grown outdoors. Trim back the spent flower heads to promote carbohydrate storage for next year's bloom buds, and then keep feeding and watering as needed until the foliage turns dry and brownish in color. They can be removed when they come off easily when pulled gently by hand. At that point, growth has ceased in the above ground plant material and you can move them about to replant in another pot or plant in an outdoor site. A word of caution – the bulbs used for forcing may not be outdoor hardy for our climate zone. Those flowering bulbs that are sold early in the season are grown in climate controlled greenhouse settings prior to purchase and are chosen for their beauty, scent, and cost effective ease of production – not necessarily cold hardiness. If the plants were not accompanied by some identification as to species and/or variety – give them a whirl outside and see what happens next spring. If you don't want to risk potentially losing those beautiful flower bulbs – repot for indoor forcing and just make sure that the bulbs have the correct length of dormancy and cold treatment to assist in leaf and maybe, if you're really lucky, flower production for the next year. These treatment lengths may vary for each bulb species and you will need to do a bit of homework to find the appropriate information. For outdoor planting, find a spot with nice, loose soil, work it up to a depth of about 10 inches and mix in a bit of bulb fertilizer - following the instructions on the product label. Place the bulbs into the hole and just leave them alone. Placing them in an area that doesn't receive a lot of water during the summer months is best as they are dormant during this period. If replanting them into another container, start with a clean, disinfected pot and using new soil, plant away. Set them aside (a nice spot outside works well) and water only once a month or so to respect their dormant stage. Encouraging them out of dormancy in early winter can be done easily, after the required cooling temperature period, with an increase in watering. As they begin to send green shoots, move them into a brighter light situation and enjoy.

Lilies purchased for the spring seasons are generally *Lilium longiflorum* 'Nellie White', 'Ace', or 'Georgia'. None of these are guaranteed hardy further north than USDA zone 5

climates. In this area, depending on the weather, zone 5 plants are somewhat marginal in survival. If you want to try (and why not give it a whirl) to get an "Easter" lily to grow outdoors, a few site considerations should be thought out in advance. Choose a location that is somewhat protected from the winter elements, on a slight slope, if possible, to minimize early and late season cold damage. *Lilium longiflorum* grow best in full sun when planted in a good, loose textured, well drained soil, relatively high in organic matter in an area that receives average moisture. Carefully remove the plant from the container and place into the chosen spot of prepared soil. Disturb the root area as little as possible. If the plant is happy throughout the summer (a bit of fertilizer will help), you may be rewarded with a second bloom in the fall. After the foliage has died back in the fall, and the ground has frozen solid, applying a few inches of quality mulch will give it a bit of extra help to make it through the winter. If no chances are to be taken, it can be dug up, repotted, and brought in for the winter, just make sure it has an adequate cool dormant period before forcing it to bloom for early spring.

Play around a bit with these and enjoy your gifts a second – maybe third – time.