

Martasians

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Lilium martagon has been a fruitful species for lily hybridizers for over a century; the original Backhouse hybrids raised by Mrs. R.O. Backhouse by crossing *L. martagon* with *L. hansonii* date from the 1890's. Until recently, martagon hybrids have involved crosses between the closely related species in the Horticultural Division II, including *L. martagon*, *L. hansonii*, *L. medeoloides*, *L. distichum*, and *L. tsingtauense*. A new group of martagon hybrids has recently emerged, dubbed "Martasians", by crossing martagons with more distantly related asiatic species and hybrids (Horticultural Division I). Martasians hold the promise of combining the exceptional disease tolerance and longevity of the martagons, with the wider range of flower colors and flower forms offered in the asiatic species and hybrids.

The first martasian cross that I made was *L. martagon album* x *L. pumilum*, in 1997. Normal pollination (not cut style) was employed, and embryo rescue was performed at approximately 50 days after pollination. The resulting plants grew vigorously, and most bloomed in 1999. All of the plants had scattered leaves like *L. pumilum*, unlike the whorled foliage of *L. martagon*, but the foliage was wider than *L. pumilum*. The flowers were down-facing with recurved petals, as expected, and the flower color ranged from pale cream to dull orange, with various amounts of pale purple spotting.



L. martagon album x *L. pumilum* hybrids

Over the last seven years, several characteristics of the *L. martagon album* x *L. pumilum* hybrids have emerged. First, they appreciate and may even require, growing conditions that suit *L. pumilum*: full sun and very well drained soil. All of the hybrids exhibit very tall, well spaced inflorescences that are well suited for showing or garden display. Most of the clones have one bud per pedicel, but a few clones have secondary buds. The bulb color is intermediate between the parents, being a straw yellow color, while the bulb size is larger than either parent. The bulbs divide readily and quickly, and most of the clones also produce stem bulblets, a characteristic that I have not observed with either parent. I have been happy with this group of hybrids, as they provide a delicate splash of beauty very early in the season.



Our daughter, Isabella, admires a group of *L. martagon album* x *L. pumilum* hybrids, sharing a bed with *Paeonia* hybrids and *Echium russicum*.

After the successful bloom of the *L. martagon album* x *L. pumilum* hybrids, additional martasian crosses were attempted. Hybrids have been raised using *L. martagon album* or *L. martagon* as the pod parent, and *L. pumilum* yellow bunting, *L. davidii*, *L. cernuum*, *L. amabile*, and *L. concolor* as pollen parents. Additionally, blooming hybrids have been raised using the asiatic hybrids 'George Slate', 'Nutmegger' and a white asiatic seedling as pollen parents. In all cases, normal pollination and embryo rescue was utilized. All of the resulting hybrids have scattered leaves, typical of asiatics, although the width of the leaves is wider than the asiatic parent. Advanced generation hybrids or back crosses to martagons may be necessary to recover the whorled foliage typical of martagons.

The cross *L. martagon album* x white asiatic seedling has produced a number of very nice clones, all in the pink to lavender color range, with variable amounts of spotting. The flowers from this cross are especially long lasting, and coupled with the tall inflorescences and high bud counts, the plants provide a long lasting show in the garden.

L. martagon album x 'George Slate' has produced three clones, all sporting cream to buff colors, with purple highlights and spots.

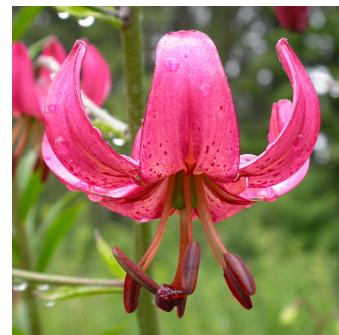
L. martagon x *L. amabile* hybrids have pink flowers with the glossy flower sheen of *L. amabile*. These hybrids have high bud counts; one bulb produced two stems with a total of over 100 blooms!

The cross *L. martagon* x *L. davidii* has produced two flowering clones thus far, the finest bearing an orange flower with delicate purple spotting.

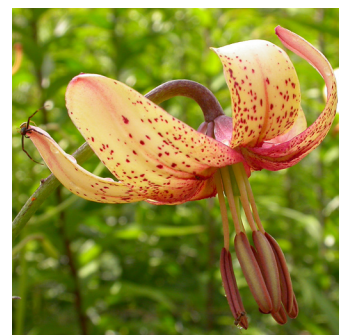
Three clones have flowered from the cross *L. martagon album* x 'Nutmegger'. All are vigorous, with flowers considerably larger than a typical martagon or any of the other martasians flowered thus far. They have high bud counts, but the inflorescences have an informal flower arrangement.

I have a number of additional crosses that have not yet flowered, including crosses with upright asiatics, speckled asiatics, and f2 martasian hybrids. It will be interesting to see the flowers from these crosses as they bloom over the next year or two.

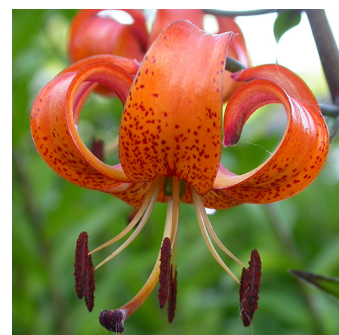
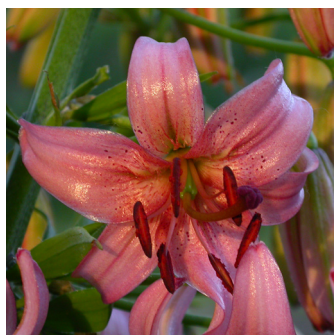
The possibilities that exist within martasians are practically boundless, given that number of asiatic species and hybrids that will apparently cross with martagons, and the possibilities of advanced generation hybrids between martasians. Time will tell if the resulting hybrids will turn out to have the characteristics of good garden lilies, namely resistance to disease, staying power, ease of culture, and of course, beauty.



***L. martagon album* x asiatic seedling**

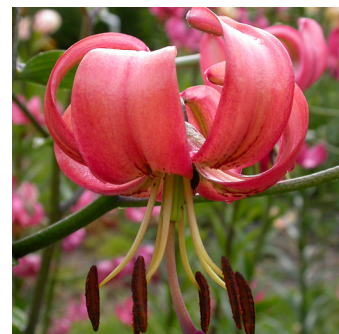
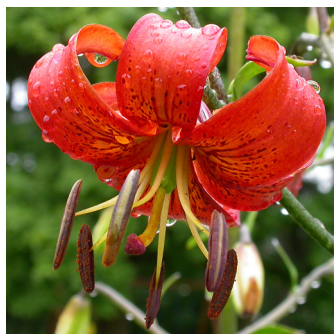


***L. martagon album* x 'George Slate'**



***L. martagon* x
*L. amabile***

***L. martagon* x
*L. davidii***



***L. martagon album* x 'Nutmegger'**