The Lily Species behind Today’s Hybrids: Part Two
Small-Flowered Asiatic Species

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In the 1981 Lily Yearbook, I discussed the importance to hybridizers of an extensive knowledge of the characteristics of the lily species. We must remember that the physical characteristics of past, present, and future Lilium hybrids are the product of the species’ traits. In that article, I outlined the characteristics of the species which have most affected modern Asiatic hybrids: Lilium davidii, L. wilsonii, L. bulbiferum, L. dauricum, L. tigrinum, L. cernuum, L. leichtlinii var. maximowiczii, and L. amabile. Now I would like to continue the discussion, describing the characteristics and breeding histories of a second group of species: the small-flowered species, Lilium pumilum, Lilium callosum, and Lilium concolor.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Species</th>
<th>Lilium pumilum</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Flower form</td>
<td>Strongly reflexed turk’s-cap</td>
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<tr>
<td>Inflorescence</td>
<td>Raceme</td>
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<tr>
<td>Color variation</td>
<td>Shiny surface. Brilliant orange-red in type, softer true orange in ‘Golden Gleam’ mutant forms, and clear lemon yellow in recessive yellow mutants such as ‘Yellow Bunting.’</td>
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<tr>
<td>Spotting</td>
<td>None</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bud count</td>
<td>5 to 25. Highly varied, according to geographical location and bulb size.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Height variation</td>
<td>15 inches to 5 feet (0 to 150 cm), depending upon the geographic strain.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stem strength</td>
<td>Willowy; vigorous strains require staking.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Foliage</td>
<td>Grass-like, averaging 3 inches (8 cm) long and ½ inch (0.3 cm) wide. Leaves curl laterally to produce a whirling effect on the stem.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Soil preference</td>
<td>Extremely hardy; will grow in most well-drained garden soils.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Geographic locations</td>
<td>Northeastern Asia—Siberia, Manchuria, and Mongolia. Survives harshest winters.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Germination</td>
<td>Immediate epigeal. Plants develop rapidly and often flower during the first season.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Disease resistance</td>
<td>Since this is usually a short-lived species, producing copious seed and readily grown from seed, it is difficult to assess its response to the various viruses. It is moderately resistant to Fusarium bulb-rot and to Botrytis blight, especially if it is not overwatered. Although considered a short-lived species, it will persist for many years if attended and not permitted to spend itself in seed production.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Lilium pumilum

Lilium callosum

Lilium concolor

Lilium concolor f. coridion

Photos by Herman Wall
Interspecific compatibilities  Will cross with *L. dauricum*, *L. bulbiferum*, *L. concolor*, *L. davidii*, *L. amabile*; and others. Crosses with *L. cernuum* by embryo-culturing.

At Columbia-Platte, we have been directing much attention to hybrids from *L. pumilum*, being captivated by its brilliant colors, dainty flower size, and charming grace. The most intense effort has been applied since 1975; it took a number of years before this to acquire proper breeding materials and to evaluate their affinities. An account of this team effort appears in the 1978 *Lily Yearbook*, and it includes photographs of several of the hybrids described below.

While I was attempting to find parents for F1 crosses to broaden our breeding base, Judith McRae was searching the lily world for existing *L. pumilum* hybrids, which were scarce. (*Lilium pumilum* is an extremely fertile species intraspecifically, and many "hybrids," in which it was pollinated by other parents, prove to be simply true *L. pumilum*. Most of the true hybrids have had *L. pumilum* as the pollen parent, although some pollinations upon *L. pumilum*, as discussed later, have produced true hybrids.) She received some fine stock from Charles Robinson in Canada; he had worked for some years to produce hybrids which incorporated *L. cernuum*, *L. davidii*, and the Stenographer hybrids into *L. pumilum* breeding. (See his article in the 1977 *Lily Yearbook.*) She also received from Dr. Fritz Ewald of Germany bulbs of several *L. pumilum* hybrids, including the hybrid described by Peter Geiser in the 1975 *Lily Yearbook*, *L. pumilum* × *L. bulbiferum*; this hybrid was originally produced in Eastern Germany, and we appreciate the efforts of our Swiss and German friends in making it available for our hybridization.

Two of our own F1 *L. pumilum* crosses have been most valuable in breeding and are proving to be of great importance in our programmed breeding. The first is "L218," my cross of *L. pumilum* pollinated with a bicolored 'Rainbow' selection; this produced several clones, one pollen-free, and all with the long elegant raceme and charming poise of *L. pumilum*. These are fertile, and in the second generation they have engendered pastels of the whole gamut from creams to pinks to buffs to yellows to golds to oranges, as well as the deep brilliant reds; and these are produced in flower forms varying from pendant and reflexed to upright and starry.

Our second important "breeder" is *L. concolor* × *L. pumilum*, and we were quite pleased to see its semi-pendant flowers, verifying its status as a true hybrid and
not an apomictic *concolor*, when it first flowered. This duplicates the cross originally made by Harold F. Comber, aptly named by him *L. × intermedium*, for it is intermediate between the two parents. Ours was produced by embryo-culturing, and it has proved to have fertile pollen, so that we were able rather quickly to produce a large second and third generation. These again have permitted the broad color spectrum and range of forms to emerge, depending upon the other parents used; and we have looked for hybrids with the daintiness and elegance of *L. pumilum* and *L. concolor* in the offspring.

Ruth Clas also contributed to our effort with her hybrid ‘Scamp,’ ‘Golden Chalice’ (very close to true *dauricum*) × *L. pumilum*, and her second-generation ‘Scamp’ hybrids. She used A. J. Porter’s fine *L. pumilum*, and a number of the hybrids from ‘Scamp’ have shown the deep yellow-gold flowers and lovely black stems and leaves (and bud reverse) which came from it. One attractive clone from ‘Stroynaja’ × ‘Scamp’ has unspotted brilliant yellow pendant flowers and glossy black stems, and it has in turn produced upright and out-facing black-stemmed yellow and gold lilies of sturdier stature.

We have also done some hybridizing with Professor Taylor’s old *L. pumilum* hybrid ‘Goldcrest,’ which has been growing for over thirty years. It has given some highly vigorous and attractive seedlings, notable for their daintily-proportioned flowers and often luminous golden tones.

*Lilium pumilum*’s assets include tiny flowers, glistening flower surface, dense pigmentation, early flowering, rapid maturity from seed, long racemid inflorescence, and great hardiness. In hardiness it rivals *L. dauricum*, and their areas of origin overlap.

The principal drawback is narrow foliage, which does not breed out until the second or third generation. The untested virus tolerance may prove to be disadvantageous, but hybrids so far seem to have a good degree of tolerance. We do not think that the usual short longevity will prove to be a problem, for this does not seem to be characteristic even of the first generation hybrids. The scent of *L. pumilum* is transmitted to its offspring, often subtly changed, so that among them will be some seedlings with a pleasing fragrance and some that unfortunately faintly shadow the Markagons in their “essence of old tennis shoes.”
Lilium callosum

Flower form
Tiny, tightly-recurved turk's-cap. Tepals hug and envelop the entire ovary before flaring.

Inflorescence
Raceme with very short pedicels

Color variation
Dull brick red in type; lovely bright yellow in form flaviflorum (or luteum).

Spotting
Tiny black streak spots on type. Form flaviflorum (or luteum) which we have seen is spotless.

Bud count
5 to 10 on average; well-cultivated forms may exceed this.

Height variation
Tall! 5 feet (150 cm) or more. Flowers look like many little emblems atop a flag pole.

Stem strength
Not strong enough for height.

Foliage
Up to 5 inches (13 cm) long and ½ inch (1 cm) wide. Rather brittle and easily broken in wind.

Soil preference
Neutral to slightly acid on type. Isolated yellow form likes acid volcanic soil.

Geographic locations
Type is widely distributed in China, Manchuria, Japan, and Formosa. Yellow form is isolated on the island of Okinawa.

Germination
Immediate epigal. Matures rapidly from seed.

Disease resistance
This species is short-lived and needs specific growing conditions, so that it is hard to assess virus tolerance. Extremely susceptible to fusarium and only moderately resistant to botrytis.

Interspecific compatibilities
Hybridizing data in early stages. Will cross with L. amabile, L. pumilum, L. dauricum, and L. concolor; others are possible.

In the late 1960's Ruth Clas returned to hybridizing with L. callosum, crossing L. callosum with L. amabile and its forms and later crossing these hybrids with L. leichtlinii var. maximowiczii f. unicolor, to produce 'Maxiclas.' (This was discussed in our account of L. amabile in the 1981 Lily Yearbook.) Through the help and sharing of Ruth Clas and of Harrison (Pete) Peters, the materials came to Columbia-Platte for further work.

Advancing L. callosum hybrids has been interesting, for there are many drawbacks to overcome. We knew from the beginning that it would not be easy! Such things as strengthening and shortening stems and giving fusarium resistance and longevity had to be top priorities.

Lilium callosum offers some unique and appealing advantages, however. It has the tiniest flowers of any species, Asiatics or otherwise, and it flowers in the late season—the only tiny-flowered Asiatic species to do so. It can be crossed (with some difficulty) with L. concolor, which helps in opening up that recalcitrant species to a broader breeding program.

Our efforts have been directed in two ways: first, in breeding with stronger and more resistant later-flowering hybrids, and then by returning these closer to L. callosum for its tiny flowers and late flowering. The second stage still needs further work; we are selecting for tiny, upfacing, late-flowering garden plants. We were pleased to have a seedling M-43, an upright, lemon-yellow with mid-sized flowers of typical callosum form, receive the Hornback Award at the NALS Annual Show in
1982. This was produced from crossing a vigorous, short, upright, spotless yellow Asiatic with [(‘Golden Dauricum’ × *callosum flaviflorum*) × [(*callosum* × *amabile luteum*) × *callosum flaviflorum*)]. These seedlings were all quite vigorous and showed an interesting variation in height, flower size, and flower form.

Judith started in 1980 to develop tiny pastel *L. callosum* hybrids, crossing the tiny pastels that have originated from second- and third-generation *pumilum* and *concolor* hybrids with the ‘Jewels of Albany,’ yellow *L. callosum* hybrids of medium height, broader-than-type foliage, small flowers, and a range of spotting types and shades of yellow. Some are almost chartreuse.

Unless the breeder is so inclined, it is unwise to start over with this species. Drawbacks are difficult to overcome. It is wiser to use the existing hybrids and to watch for others as they are released. This will save much time and effort.

Like *L. concolor*, *L. callosum* has a short style. Its pollen grains do not have to grow long pollen tubes. For this reason, when using pollen of *L. callosum* or its hybrids, it helps to amputate the style of the female parent. Better seed yields, however, will come from using *L. callosum* as the seed parent.

### *Lilium concolor*

- **Flower form**: Up-facing small star shapes. Fairy-like with great charm.
- **Inflorescence**: Only up-facing Asiatic species with racemic placement.
- **Color variation**: Type is brilliant scarlet. True yellow in recessive mutants.
- **Spotting**: Highly varied from spotless to black, fine-streak spotting.
- **Bud count**: 5 to 10, depending upon form.
- **Height variation**: Usually 18 to 30 inches (50-75 cm); well-cultivated forms may be taller.
- **Stem strength**: Adequate but should be improved by hybridizing.
- **Foliage**: Usually about 3 inches (8 cm) long and ½ inch (0.3 cm) wide. Sparse on stem—a dominant trait in *F₁* hybrids.
- **Soil preference**: Slightly acid to slightly alkaline
**Lilium concolor** flowers in the later part of the early season, about a week or ten days after *L. pumilum.*