

## *Lilium japonicum*: cultivation notes

Hideo Ihara writes:

“*Lilium japonicum* grows wild in hills and low mountains in thickets on slopes. In Hokkaido we grow *Lilium japonicum* in a net greenhouse (ceiling is vinyl) that gets full sun all morning. When the temperature exceeds 30°C, a 30% shade net is used. Photos of *L. japonicum* growing in this net greenhouse may be seen at <https://rhslilygroup.org/photo-gallery/#sibjap>

Key countermeasures against bulb rot are: excellent drainage, control the rise of soil temperature. Do not irrigate leaves, water in the evening during hot weather. Liquid fertilizer is given once every two weeks except in summer.”

Alisdair Aird writes:

“Contrary to most published information, I’m pretty sure that its germination is not consistently delayed hypogeal, but is variably delayed (perhaps useful given its climate?). Regardless of whether sown in a cool or cold greenhouse, or whether sown in January or March, for me a few seeds usually produce their first leaf that same April, and a few more the following April.

It’s essential to keep the compost moist from March-April onwards while the plantlets stay in growth, and if you can keep them in a greenhouse for their first year or two don’t let them get too hot - best shaded in summer. I personally don’t pot off the young seedlings until they are two or three years old, so don’t put too many seeds in a 5-inch pot. A 5-inch pot makes it easier to keep the root temperature and the moisture reasonably stable than a smaller one.

When they are big enough I pot them each into 3-litre long tom pots, in well drained lime-free compost topped with coarse grit. Beware of snails when they are coming into growth! (If a snail gets at a seedling *japonicum* pot, incidentally, it will wipe them out.)

I put these pots outside in a sheltered area which I can partly shade in a hot summer (I don’t shade at all in a dull or wet one). I think the mature stems can take abundant summer heat so long as the atmosphere is at least fairly buoyant and preferably on the humid side, but it seems essential that the bulbs and roots stay cool and fairly moist. So I keep the pots along the North side of a raised bed, in its shade.

In the last few years I’ve been taking these pots into our big high-sided polytunnel from the end of summer through winter, keeping them only just moist, a rather “dryish” sort of moist, until the temperature starts rising in early March (or even late February) when I start giving them more water. Then they need abundant water right through spring and summer.

Don’t expect flowers for several years - but they are very much worth the wait!”

See also the excellent article by Alisdair Aird on Japanese lilies in the 2019-2020 edition of *Lilies & Related Plants*, pages 41-50.

[https://rhslilygroup.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/19\\_RHS\\_LRPs\\_for-web.pdf](https://rhslilygroup.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/19_RHS_LRPs_for-web.pdf)

**Seed compost:** all Japanese lilies like an acid compost so add a little ericaceous compost/peat **but** it must also be free draining so grit and/or coarse sand is

important. Try to keep the compost **moist** NOT really wet. Also, it must never dry out, even in summer.

**Cultivation:**

Perfect drainage is essential, keep the compost moist at all times. In Japan it gets a lot of rain in summer. Roots must be kept cool but flowers like to be able to grow into full sun.