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Crinum asiaticum Family: Amaryllidacea

Late January, Ft. Myers, Florida

Crinum Lily; Tree Crinum; Poison Bulb

Synonym (Discarded Name): *Crinum amabile*
Origin: Tropical and Sub-tropical Asia
U.S.D.A. Zone: 8b-11 (Minimum 15°F)
Growth Rate: Medium
Flowering Months: Year-round in South Florida with brief respites
Leaf Persistence: Evergreen
Salt Tolerance: Medium
Light Requirements: Medium
Drought Tolerance: Medium
Soil Requirements: Wide
Nutritional Requirements: Wide
Potential Problems: Grasshoppers; caterpillars; Anthracnose
Typical Dimensions: 6' x 6'
Propagation: Division; offset; seed
Human hazards: Poisonous
Uses: Container; flowering perennial; fragrance; landscape; poolside; roadway

Flowering in April, Ft. Myers, Florida

Natural Geographic Distribution
The crinum lily, *Crinum asiaticum,* is native to tropical Southeast Asia. It has been dispersed widely by humans and is now cultivated the world over in tropical and subtropical climates.

Morphology, Growth Habit and Reproduction
Crinum lily is an evergreen perennial herb. Several cultivars exist, some with bronze, purple or variegated foliage. Newly emerged leaves are erect becoming sprawling with age making the plant as tall as it is broad, often greater than 6 feet tall. The columnar stem-like bulb, about 12 to 15 inches long, grows mostly above the ground. The leaves are arranged in a rosette. They are flat, strap-like gradually narrow to a sharp point at the end. They are typically 4 to 5 feet long and 5 inches wide. In most South Florida gardens, crinum lily flowers almost all year round with brief resting periods. The inflorescence is an umbel that normally contains from 20 to 30 flowers. It stands between and a little above the foliage on a strong scape of about 50 to 70 inches tall on healthy plants. Flowers in the inflorescence open from the outside inward. The flower is radially symmetrical, erect and salver-shaped. It has six pure white, or striped with claret-red or tinted with rose-purple petals. They are flaring or gracefully rolled back. The stamens are long and exserted. The flowers are pleasantly fragrance, especially during the night and morning hours. An umbel is spent of its flowers in approximately three weeks but others are consistently being produced from the same plant. The scape starts to weakened as the fruit begins to form. The majority of fruit never come to maturity. If formed, the fruit is irregularly globose.

The inflorescence is an umbel that opens from the outside inwards. Ft. Myers, late January

The flower is erect and salver-shaped. Ft. Myers, late November

Stripe claret-red petals. Ft. Myers, Florida

Flower and Fruit Development

The young seedlings do not bear flowers for three to four years. The plant commonly reproduces by suckers and eventually forms an impressive clump. Division of the plant is the preferred method of propagation. Crinums are distinguished from Amaryllis by their solid scapes and long, salver-shaped flowers.

Plant growing in medium shade. Orlando, Florida, mid- April

Taking a temporary respite from flowering. Plant growing in light shade. St. Petersburg, early June

Panama City, Florida, mid-September

A bronze-colored plant. St. Petersburg, Florida, early June

Irregularly globose fruit.

Germinating seeds, late November

Suckers at the base of the plant helps it to form a large clump.

The columnar stem-like bulbs grow partly above ground.

Planting and Maintenance Guidelines

C. asiaticum is probably the most widely grown crinum in south Florida. It can be planted as far north as Panama City, Florida, but some degree of cold damage, including killed leaves should be expected each year. It can be used on the edge of ponds and around aquatic gardens. It may be used as a border or accent plant. Crinum lily shows a remarkable power of multiplication and survival even under the most unfavorable conditions. It is best planted from spring into fall in full sun or in light to medium shade. The plant flourishes in a well-drained, moderately moist soil. However, it does well in dry soil where occasional irrigation during the dry season is recommended.

Crinum lily is susceptible to several insect pests including the lubber grasshopper and the banded greenhouse thrips, *Hercinothrips femoralis*. It takes only a few grasshoppers to cause considerable damage in a short time. The thrips attacks a wide variety of ornamental plants. Some plants are likely to develop Anthracnose leaf spot a fungal disease caused by *Colletotrichum sp*. This pathogen spreads by spores that are easily splashed with irrigation water or rainfall but since they are somewhat sticky they do not easily spread by simple air movement from the wind. Wounding can increase disease severity but it is not necessary for pathogen entry. The disease begins on the lower leaves with the fungal spots enlarging and coalescing and eventually killing the leaf from the apex downward to its base. The disease is far less evident in the spring with minimal rainfall. To keep up appearance, occasional cleaning of the lower plant is suggested along with the removal of excess suckers.

All parts of the plant can cause severe irritation if ingested. The sap can cause skin irritation.

Eastern lubber grasshopper feeding on crinum lily.

Damage caused by banded greenhouse thrips.

Anthracnose leaf spots

Necrosis occurs from the tip downward.

References

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Watkins, J., Sheehan, T. and Black, R. 2005. Florida Landscape Plants: Native and Exotic, Second Edition. University Press of Florida, Gainesville, FL

Click here to view Stephen Brown's web page.
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This fact sheet was reviewed by Peggy Cruz, Lee County Extension Service and Rachel Singletary, Caloosa Rare Fruit Club and Florida Native Plant Society.

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