

Scales

Naturally, you don't want your lilies to do all the multiplying by themselves. You want to get into the act too and growing from scales will give you that chance. Most amateurs scale their lilies, especially the expensive ones, before they plant the bulbs. It does no harm to a firm fat bulb to snatch off a few scales, about four to eight, for propagation purposes. Do not be too greedy though because scales are your lily bulb's food supply for next year. Snap off the scales close to the bulb, and dust both the bulb and scales with a fungicide. It is always good insurance to dust bulbs before planting. This way you can manage two operations with one shake of dust.

The scales are placed in a plastic bag of slightly damp peat moss or vermiculite, labeled, fastened, and stored at approximately 70° Fahrenheit for a few weeks. If you keep peeking at them, you will see the fascinating process of bulblet production through the polyethylene without opening the bag.

Some people detach the bulblets when they have formed roots and grown to a good size. The bulblets may be planted then in pots if it is still winter or stored in separate bags of peat moss in the refrigerator while the scales may be returned for another round of incubation. Or, better, the whole scale with bulblets attached may be planted and the scale used to help nourish the baby bulbs.

Scale bulblets require 6 to 12 weeks chilling in the refrigerator, if they are not wintered outside, before making top growth. In the spring they may be planted out four inches apart in the nursery bed. In a couple of years or so they will be blooming-size bulbs.



Scaling Lilies in the Garden

If you must scale a lily that is already growing in your garden, wait until just after flowering, then dig down carefully around the stem to expose the bulb, but leaving the basal roots intact. Discard any dead shriveled outside scales; break off a few good firm ones; then dust the cut surfaces with a fungicide and replace the soil. Processed by the plastic bag method, these scales will likely have formed bulblets by fall and may be planted in time to settle in before winter.

