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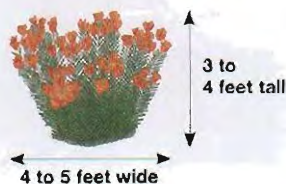


Long-lasting cut flowers from a tropical-looking plant

NAME: 'The Third Harmonic' Peruvian lily (*Alstroemeria* 'The Third Harmonic')

ZONES: 7 to 10

CONDITIONS: Full sun to partial shade; moist, well-drained soil (regular water for continuous bloom)



THIS LILY GETS TOP BILLING in my garden because of its lush, light green foliage and brightly colored flowers that have exotic markings. I especially love how great it looks with my favorite tropical plants. The flowers of 'The Third Harmonic' are not the typical pink that most of us are accustomed to. They are, instead, a cheerful golden color with vivid peachy orange stripes. Best of all, this plant blooms from spring through fall.

Although 'The Third Harmonic' looks like an exotic, hard-to-grow tropical, it is hardy, to Zone 7 and easy to grow. This lily is even a good choice for dry gardens because it simply goes dormant in summer if not watered and returns to bloom again in fall. 'The Third Harmonic' is a sterile, well-behaved variety that forms neat clumps. With Peruvian lilies, it's important to choose a variety marked "sterile." The unsterile versions can be horribly invasive weeds, while the sterile ones clump politely and perfectly where you set them. This is not an occasion where you should buy a cute seedling at a nursery with a label merely saying "pink."

- **No pruning shears are needed:** Instead of cutting out the spent flower stalks of Peruvian lily at its base, like you would with other perennials, you simply grasp each stalk and pull to remove it. This helps prevent rot from taking hold of the roots. I love the satisfying little "pop" it makes as the stem comes out of the ground.
- **Look forward to long-lived cut flowers:** Peruvian lily is a popular choice for florists because the cut flowers last up to two weeks in a vase. The blooms look great with the airy purple blossoms of tall verbena (*Verbena bonariensis**, Zones 7–11). The contrast of color and form creates a long-lasting and appealing display.

—Genevieve Schmidt is a landscape designer and garden coach in Arcata, California.

• • SOURCES

Digging Dog Nursery, Albion, Calif.; 707-937-1130, www.diggingdog.com

Edelweiss Perennials, Canby, Ore.; 503-263-4680; www.edelweissperennials.com

Q & A

Something new for the shade

Q Can you recommend any perennials for shade that have interesting foliage? (P.S. I'm sick of heucheras and tiarellas, and I live in Zone 4.)

—Virginia Cummings, Helena, Montana

A There is a new meadow rue on the market this year that has stunning foliage, will tolerate shade, and—best of all—is not related to a heuchera in any way, shape, or form. 'Evening Star Strain' (*Thalictrum ichangense* 'Evening Star Strain', Zones 4–9) has dark chocolate-colored



leaves with a silver star stamped on each. It's on the small side—only reaching 8 inches tall and 12 inches wide—but what it lacks in stature, it makes up for in uniqueness. This meadow rue gets tufts of lavender flowers, which appear in spring through summer. 'Evening Star Strain' was developed by Terra Nova Nurseries and is a new plant for 2010, so it's bound to be popping up soon in local garden centers across the country.