



Canna Care

Cannas grow best in the full, hot sun. They look their best when they are planted in groups of three to five roots; either with all the same color, or with multiple colors or varieties. There is not a bad mix of cannas.

Cannas are easy to plant, easy to grow, and are fun to watch bloom. Perhaps one of the biggest advantages of cannas is that deer don't seem to care for the taste of their leaves; deer just seem to leave them alone - most of the time.

The only real problem cannas encounter is that slugs and snails love to eat little holes in their big leaves. With just a little slug and snail bait, you can plant cannas and just watch them grow and bloom without much fuss.

The canna lily is an almost unknown edible. Instead, we use them solely as an ornamental flower. But in case of emergency, they can be eaten.



Cannas are often referred to as 'Canna Lilies'. However, cannas are not true lilies and they do not belong to the lily family. They were nicknamed Canna Lily because their flower stem resembles the flower stem of the ginger lily.



They look beautiful displayed in a large container or urn. The colors of the flowers are usually vibrant shades of red, pink, yellow, or orange. The broad, flat leaves are typically green, bronze, or variegated. They grow out of the stem in a long, narrow roll and then unfurl with age.



Planting Time

Plant canna roots outside in the spring, after the ground has thawed and the hard-frost season is past; usually late-April.

You can also plant cannas indoors, or in a greenhouse, four to eight weeks earlier than you can plant them outside.



When planted early, you will have large plants to plant outside in May. Many gardeners will plant their cannas into one gallon size pots about mid-March and then wait until the chance of frost is past to plant these growing canna plants outside; usually mid-May.

Location

Cannas grow best in full sun. They will tolerate a little shade but they require a minimum of six hours of sunlight each day to bloom. They will also grow in the shade, but they may not bloom in total shade.

Cannas prefer loose, sandy soil with plenty of organic matter. Cannas will grow in the heavier clay soils if you can provide good drainage; so the roots do



not rot in the soil.

Some cannas are considered aquatic, and can be planted in pots and put in the boggy part of a pond, or on top of a rock in the middle of the pond; as long as the canna roots can still 'breathe'.

Planting Information

Plant canna roots five to six inches deep. Fertilize them lightly with either **Bone Meal**, **16-16-8 Multi-Purpose Fertilizer**, or **6-10-4 Vegetable & Flower Fertilizer** at planting time. Do not put the fertilizer directly on the roots, or you may burn their tender hair roots as they begin to grow.



Canna are voracious feeders, and if they are not well fed during the summer, they will not flower very well: they may not flower at all.

The soil needs to be dug, and compost or manure added. It is difficult to overfeed cannas, and they will even tolerate lots of FRESH manure!



If you simply scrape a hole in barren soil, beneath a tree, or in a rock garden, and expect a canna to thrive, then forget it.

Water

Water your canna roots thoroughly when you first plant them. After the first watering, cannas do not need much water until the plant actually starts to bloom. During the hot summer be sure to water your cannas consistently, not constantly, especially while they are blooming, to help prolong their blossom time.

They will grow in damp places, even waterlogged places, and can also withstand dry conditions (though they may curl their leaves for protection if it gets too bad - a sign that they need watering).



Blossoms

Cannas bloom from July until frost, producing tall stalks with many colorful blossoms on each stalk. A single flower spike of a Canna Lily can last several weeks.



In August and September, when other flowers have reached their peak, the Canna Lilies are displaying a magnificent showcase of color and texture in the flower bed.

Remove the faded blossoms to keep the flowers looking their best. To prolong flowering, clip off each flower as it starts to fade, before it sets seed.



It would be nice if cannas could be grown from seeds, but the problem is that many cannas are sterile, and do not produce seeds. Even when they do produce viable seeds, they usually don't come true. You may get something interesting, but it probably won't look like the parent plant.

When all of the blossoms on a flower stalk fade, cut that stalk off at ground level. More flower stalks are probably already growing and more flower stalks should start to appear as soon as you remove the older, faded flowers.

Canna leaves are useful in cut flower arrangements but the cut canna flowers do not last very long.

Although gardeners enjoy these interesting flowers, nature really intended them to attract pollinators, such as bees, hummingbirds, and bats, so that they could collect the nectar and pollen.

Staking

Canna are very strong and sturdy plants, and even the tall varieties do not require staking. It is very rare to see a canna which has been blown over, whatever its location. However, in an open and exposed site, they may look somewhat windswept and tattered.



Insects

Young plants should be protected from slugs and snails which ignore full grown leaves but have a preference for the new shoots. A single nibble at this stage by a slug will cause a disfiguring row of holes as the leaf unfurls that will disfigure the leaf for the rest of the year. Older plants are not often troubled by slugs and snails.



Aphids are rarely seen on cannas, but because virus disease is spread by aphids, it is best to spray for aphids if any are seen, particularly if there are infected canna plants nearby.

Red Spider Mite can occasionally infest cannas. The symptoms are dry-looking leaves which turn brown. When examined closely on the underside, such leaves show traces of a white



powder (which is the dried egg-cases) particularly near the central leaf rib. Shake the leaf on to a piece of white paper and you will see myriads of extremely tiny creatures running around. You really need a magnifying glass to see them.



Propagation

Although they sometimes produce seeds, it is often not worth the effort to germinate them because it's so easy to propagate them using the rhizomes.

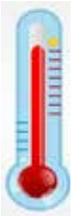
Cannas are not fussy creatures. You can divide them at any time of the year, even when in full growth. Provided you give them a good watering after this trauma, they will hardly notice the change.

Divide the roots, in the fall - after digging them up for the winter, just enough so they will store easily during the winter. The larger roots will store easier than the smaller roots.

Wait until spring to divide the canna roots into the planting size. By spring you will also be able to see any other disease or insect problems that may have occurred during winter storage.

Fall and Winter Care

Cannas are winter hardy in zones 7 to 10. We live in zones 3 to 5. Therefore, in our area, the rhizomes must be lifted and stored for the winter.



Canna roots will not always survive the winter if they are left outside during the winter. You may have a spot in your yard that may provide enough winter protection for canna roots to survive, but, if you really want to save your canna roots from year to year you should dig them in the fall, and store them in a protected area during the winter. This fall harvest and winter storage procedure also helps you remember to divide your cannas regularly, so they always stay healthy.

Cannas grow from a thick, multi eyed, rhizome type of root system. Dig canna roots in the fall after a hard-frost has killed much of the top growth. Put the canna roots into a protected area, to let the leaves continue to die naturally, and to let the roots dry out before storage.



After the leaves have all died and turned brown, cut the leaves off the roots. Shake as much soil off the roots as possible. Inspect the roots for any decay or insect damage. Do not store diseased or damaged roots; they may spoil the rest of the roots.

Dust the canna roots with **Bonide Garden Dust** as you put them into your winter storage area. Be sure to coat any cut or broken surface areas of your bulbs. This dust helps prevent rotting and kills insects that may have gone undetected during your inspection.



Allow the canna bulbs to dry for a few days before storing, where they will



not freeze. Store your canna roots in wooden boxes or in plastic crates; not in plastic bags. Burlap bags are also an excellent way to store canna roots for the winter.



Canna roots need to be kept moist, not wet, during winter storage and they must be able to breathe. Cannas stored in sealed plastic bags often rot during the winter.

Use peat moss to help retain some moisture. Pack the bulbs in the peat moss, in such a way that no two of them touch. Store the canna bulbs in a dry, dark, cool place around 50 degrees.

An attic, basement, garage, or crawl space is a possibility for storage. If the area is too warm, mold will grow. If the location is too cold, they may freeze.

Check your canna roots regularly during the winter to make sure they are not kept too wet or too dry. Check for mice and other rodents that may eat or damage your cannas. Canna roots are especially tasty to mice during the winter because other food is often scarce.

You might wonder why, in the above steps, mention was made of the need both for moisture and for dryness. Is that not a contradiction? Well, the point is to strive for a balance. Too much moisture will rot the canna bulbs; while not enough moisture will cause dehydration. Just try to avoid either extreme.

Water Cannas

Water cannas (*Canna glauca*) strongly resemble the common canna varieties. The Longwood hybrid grow about 2' to 6' tall, and depending on the variety, the color can range from butter yellow to orange to peach to bright red.



In summer, water cannas can be placed in containers in ponds with no more than 6in of water over the roots. They grow well in very moist soil, with the crown slightly submersed. They are also suitable for areas where potted plants can be stood in deep saucers full of water.

Before autumn frosts, bring these potted cannas into a frost-free greenhouse, a shed with plenty of natural light, or into a cold, well-lit basement. Keep the pots moist, but not saturated. In April, increase temperatures, and wait to plant the growing plants outside in late May, when the risk of frost has passed.

Varieties

Many varieties of cannas are available. Some varieties of cannas produce very small flowers, and other varieties produce very large flowers. Blossom colors range from dark red, bright red, pink, salmon, coral, orange, gold, yellow, white, to multi-colored flowers; and several more shades in between.



The leaves may be dark green, light green, variegated, or even bronzy-red. The plants may grow from 18 inches

tall to more than 12 feet in height. Cannas are becoming very specialized and many growers are hybridizing canna lilies.

Some canna roots, listed in specialty catalogs, can sell for more than \$25.00 each.

Just a few of the most common varieties

Angel Pink - Grows 30" tall. Has green leaves and pink flowers.



ThePresident

Black Knight - Grows 42" tall. Has bronze leaves and red flowers.

City of Portland - Grows 4' to 5' tall. Has green leaves and salmon-pink flowers.



CityOfPortland

Cleopatra - Grows 30" tall. Has green leaves and multi-colored flowers: red with spotted and striped yellow blotches.

Crimson Beauty - Grows 30" tall. Has green leaves and red flowers.

North Star - Grows 30" tall. Has green leaves and red flowers.



YellowFuturity.

Peach Blush - Grows 3' tall. Has green leaves and peach colored flowers.

Pink Futurity - Grows 30" tall. Has green leaves and pink flowers.

Pretoria - Grows 4'. It has stunning variegated yellow and green striped leaves and large orange bi-colored flowers that attract hummingbirds and butterflies.



Pretoria

Red King Humbert - Grows 5' tall. Has green leaves and red flowers.

Rosamond Cole - Grows 3' tall. Has Green leaves and multi-colored flowers: red with golden-yellow edges.

The President - Grows 3' tall. Has green leaves and red flowers. By far the most popular variety.

Wyoming - Grows 5' tall. Has bronzy red leaves and orange flowers.

Yellow Futurity - Grows 30" tall. Has green leaves and yellow flowers.

Yellow King Humbert - Grows 5' tall. Has green leaves and bright yellow flowers.



Wyoming

Frequently Asked Questions

Why haven't my cannas flowered this year?

The usual reason is "they are hungry". Cannas are heavy feeders. In poor soil, or in soil that they have exhausted, they stop growing when the food runs out.

Another possible answer. "The cannas may be a tall variety that was planted late in the season. They may produce flowers given more time".

A canna usually produces 7 leaves and then it produces flowers. So if a canna hasn't flowered, and it has stopped growing at 5 or 6 leaves, then it is hungry, and it needs more fertilizer.



PeachBlush



YellowKing-Humbert

What do you do with cannas in the Winter?

Most gardeners always dig them up and store them until the worst of the winter is over. Other people leave them in the ground, but they are pushing their luck because if the ground freezes to cold, the cannas will be killed. Also, cannas left in the ground are always late to start to grow in the spring.

We recommend keeping them frost-free, cool, and damp. Unlike most bulbs tubers and rhizomes, canna rhizomes don't like to be dried out. They should be covered in damp peatmoss, and watered occasionally if required.

If grown in pots it is better to leave them in the pots through the winter. If dug out of the ground in a clump, they should be left in a clump through the winter. Wait to divide them until spring.

Remember, a small percentage of canna rhizomes die during storage no matter what you do, it is just in the nature of cannas.

Can canna virus be cured?

No, you must discard them and start again, with new, virus free plants, and in a new area of the yard.

Does dead-heading cannas encourage them to flower?

Dead heading can be harmful. Cannas always send up another flower shoot from within the dead flower head. They do this 3 or 4 times per flowering stem, which is why cannas have such a long flowering season.

If you dead-head a canna incorrectly, you may inadvertently be cutting off all the future flowers for the rest of the season on that flower stem, so be careful what you prune.

Do Water Cannas need to be grown in water?

No, they grow just as well in ordinary soil. The strange thing is that ordinary cannas will also grow in water.

Are Cannas really edible?

Canna lilies were once a vital food source for North-western Native Americans, and contain the highest percentage of starch of any known tuber. They can be cooked like potatoes, though the natives would also make flour from them. The tubers can be eaten raw, but cooking them makes their starch more digestible.

The young shoots can be cooked and eaten like asparagus, and the leaves can be used like banana leaves to wrap food for baking. The flowers themselves are not edible.

For more information please refer to the following website. <http://www.foragingtexas.com/2008/08/canna-lily.html>

Benefits

Canna are very easy to grow. A canna started into growth in February or March, inside a cool greenhouse, and planted outside at the beginning of June, will usually be flowering by July.

It will then flower continuously all summer and autumn, each stem producing a succession



of flower spikes, and new flowering stems growing from the ground.

They will continue to flower until cut down by winter frosts, when they are dug up and stored for the winter.

It will then be obvious that the original rhizome has multiplied many-fold, making it a very fun and wise investment, in both time and money.

Other Resources

<http://www.extension.umn.edu/garden/yard-garden/flowers/cal-la-and-canna-lilies/>

<https://www.rhs.org.uk/advice/profile?PID=324>

<http://www.missouribotanicalgarden.org/PlantFinder/PlantFinderDetails.aspx?taxonid=265515&isprofile=0&>

<http://www.aces.edu/pubs/docs/A/ANR-1315/ANR-1315.pdf>

<http://www.foragingtexas.com/2008/08/canna-lily.html>

