

Western Red Lily - *Lilium philadelphicum*

Cree Name - wakican

Saskatchewan's floral emblem! The most dramatic and exciting lily of all with the orange-scarlet blooms contrasting with its purple-brown spots.



Description:

The native lily is a protected wildflower and is therefore protected from picking in the wild. The flowers bloom from mid June through July displaying vivid reddish-orange blooms with dark purple spots. The plant stem grows 1 - 2' tall. Linear leaves alternate along the bottom of the stem with the upper leaves forming a whorl below the flower. Lilies prefer moist areas in sun or partial shade with slightly acidic soil.

Native uses:

The bulbs were dug when the flowers opened. They were roasted in the hot ashes, steamed or boiled. When boiled, this bulbous, walnut-sized root tastes rather like a potato. With its high nutrition and sweetness it was well worth the effort of grinding into meal for bread. The root was made into a tea for stomach disorders, consumption, coughs, and fevers. The crushed or chewed flowers were applied directly to the bite of a small brown, poisonous spider.

Propogation:

When grown from seed, lily plants germinate the second year after sowing. Flowers do not appear until the 3rd or 4th year. Bees and butterflies transport the pollen from one flower to another, pollinating the plant so that it will form new seeds, eventually growing into new plants.

The lily plant is also propagated from scales taken from the base of the bulb. Prairie voles and gophers often act as prairie gardeners. They like to harvest the bulbs and store them in a winter cache. But they are messy little animals and tend to drop scales from the bulbs on their way to their hiding places. These dropped scales often grow into new lily plants.



Lily bulb



Lily scales removed from the bulb