

## KINGMAN IS GROWING! Column

### CALLA LILIES

By *Laura Murphy* and *Dawn Hart*, Mohave County Master Gardeners

I am sure, that like me, many of you think of Calla Lilies as plants that do not grow in backyard gardens. I only thought of them as potted plants that my Mom received at Easter. Was I ever wrong! Callas, with their simple, classic flowers and large, shiny leaves make an excellent highlight to any garden.

There are two types of Calla Lilies—Those that prefer wet soil and those that like it a little drier, but still moist soil. Once I realized this, I had plants that were now growing like “Hot cakes” instead of just barely thriving.

#### WET-SOIL CALLAS

The traditional white calla lily, 24-30 inches tall with arrow shaped, solid green leaves, is the plant most often associated with this classification. *Zantedeschia aethiopica* is the name you will want to look for if you plan to plant them by a pond’s edge. “Green Goddess” has green tips on the flowers, and “Pink Mist”, with delicate pink flowers, will compliment any true white plants in your garden.

#### MOIST-SOIL CALLAS

This group of callas includes color ranges from deep reds, to yellow, pink, orange and salmon. Many will have dark centers, while others have blushing toward the tips. With this type there is more variety in height, as well as color, to suit your gardening needs. These callas will do well directly in the garden soil, or in pots. The bloom time is shorter than wet-soil callas, but even when not in bloom, the foliage is pretty. Most have slender lance-shaped, green leaves, but there are some with spotted leaves as well.

#### CARE AND CULTURE

Callas are found in the greenhouse or garden shop with the summer bulbs. Fill a 3-inch pot with a coarse potting soil. Place the tuber on top and cover with sand. Water them as with any houseplant. Place

the pots outside when temps are around 70 degrees. I plant mine in a bed on the northeast side of my house. This is a plot in a mostly shaded area of my yard.

When planted about 4-6 inches deep they can be lifted in the heat of the summer and placed in peat pots and cover them with dry peat or wood shavings. When the hot weather is on the wane, plan to replace them in the garden. Once the planted tubers are growing well, fertilize with a low nitrogen fertilizer about every 2-3 weeks.

Callas are easy to divide. Lift the clump after they bloom and when the leaves dry. If you are going to be gone for the summer and will be gone before the leaves dry normally, you can force them into dormancy early. Lift them from the garden and crumble off the clods of dirt. Place the tubers in a shaded area, out of the wind, and allow the remaining soil to dry. This could take a few days. By this time the remaining roots and stem should be dry enough to come off easily. It is important that the tubers are completely dry before you store them, or they may rot. Keep stored callas in a cool (55 degrees), dry place such as a refrigerator in the garage.

### **Good luck and Happy gardening!**

For more information contact The University of Arizona Mohave County Cooperative Extension at 101 E. Beale Street, Suite A, Kingman or telephone 928-753-3788.

**MARK YOUR CALENDAR!** Master Gardeners will be hosting a **fruit tree workshop** on **Saturday, January 12, 2008** in Golden Valley. More information forthcoming.

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