

Question: What are the differences between calla lilies and canna lilies? I can't remember what kind I have in my yard and how to take care of them.

AnsWER: Well, there are big differences between these two favorite plants.

Let's start with one commonality between the two: neither are in the family Liliaceae, so they are not true lilies. Both are great for beds, borders and containers, and calla lilies are sometimes grown as houseplants. Both like a moist soil – either of these plants would be great in an area of your yard with less-than-optimal drainage.

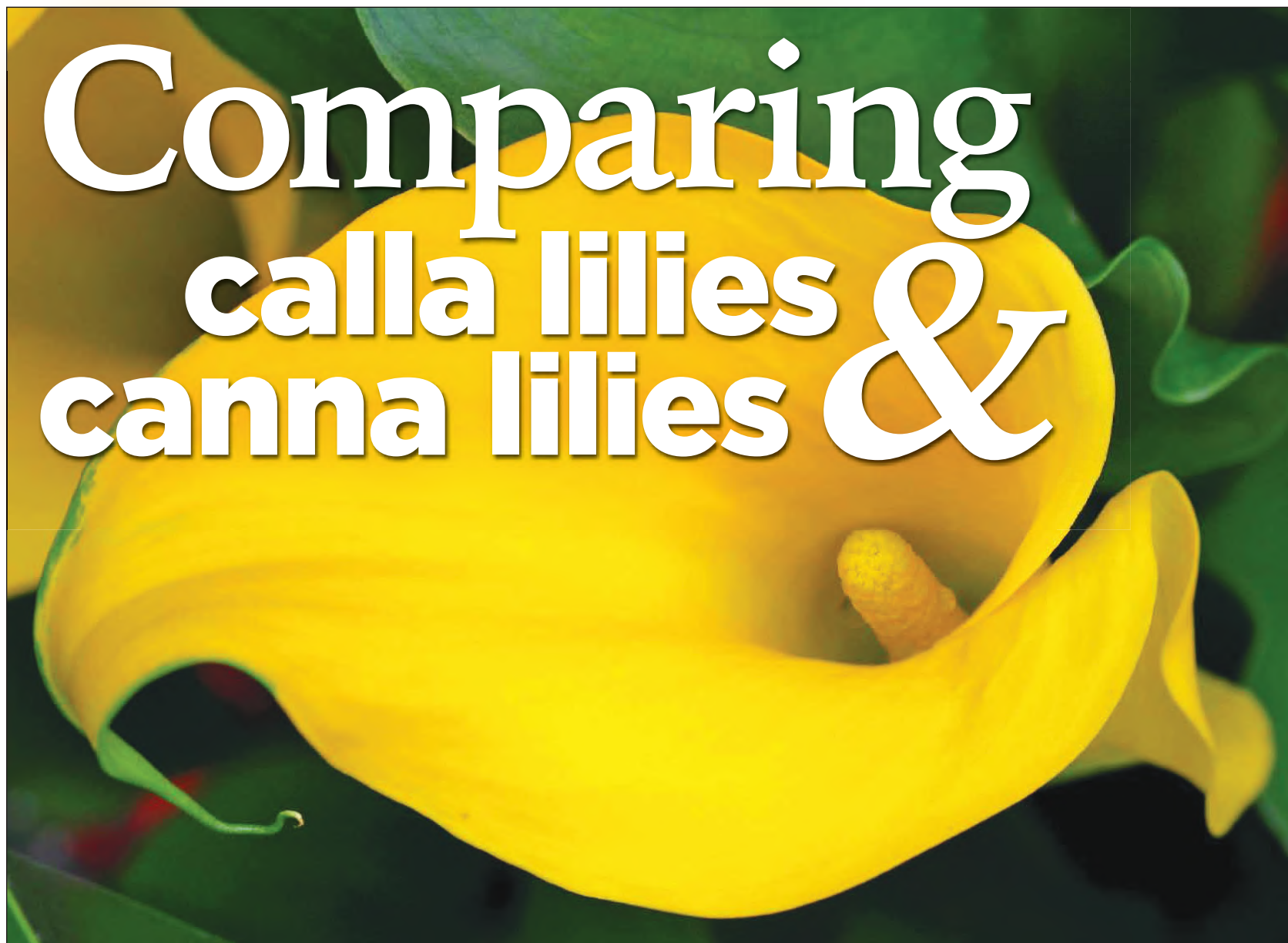
Now let's explore these two favorite plants.

Calla lilies are in the genus *Zantedeschia* and are natives of southern Africa. The white variety with the bright yellow spadix is familiar to most of us. However, callas can be pink, yellow, orange, maroon, and coral with both solid green foliage and spotted foliage. The actual flowers are very tiny and grow along the spadix, which is enclosed by a spathe (modified leaf). Most are 2-3 feet tall and 1-2 feet wide – the white variety is the largest and the hardiest species.

In colder climates, callas must be grown as an annual, but here in Douglas County, they are an easy-to-grow perennial. They have few pests – in fact, there are a couple places in California where you can find “wild” stands of the white callas and they are considered invasive. They need full sun and prefer moist soils; they are often grown alongside ponds. They grow from rhizomes and can be planted in the spring.

Callas flower in the summer and once done flowering, they need a dormant period. Allow the plant to die back, but no need to dig the rhizomes. (In containers, stop watering and move the plant to a dark area. Resume watering in 2-3 months.)

One thing you need to keep in mind is callas contain oxalic acid, which



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The white variety with the bright yellow spadix is familiar to most of us. However, callas can be pink, yellow, orange, maroon, or coral in color.



Canna flowers come in a wide variety of colors and patterns.



Canna lilies attract butterflies and hummingbirds and are listed as deer resistant.

the ASPCA lists as toxic to dogs and cats. Personally, I have these in my yard and have never

had any problems, but if you have a curious pup or cat who likes to munch on plants, you should be aware of this. Callas are considered deer resistant.

Calla lilies (*Canna* spp.) give your yard a tropical flair. In fact, they come from tropical areas of central and South America. The flowers



Janet Bitter
Ask a Master Gardener

resemble gladiolas and are on a long stalk of green to bronze to purple paddle-shaped leaves.

Canna flowers can be red, pink, orange, yellow, white, or striped. We are lucky because these also can be grown as a perennial here in most of Douglas County.

Just like callas, cannas grow from rhizomes. The plants can grow 1 ½- 6 feet tall and spread as much as 6 feet wide. They

bloom from mid- to late summer and can benefit from some deadheading. They are also very pest-resistant and easy to grow. Full sun is a requirement for outstanding blooms, and cannas also want a moist soil. Give your plants a mid-summer feeding to promote continual flowering. They attract butterflies and hummingbirds and are listed as deer resistant.

Do yourself a favor

and try one of the newer varieties of these two old-time favorites. They make great additions to your bedding or border garden or try some unusual combinations in your summer containers. You should be able to find rhizomes or plants in containers at your local garden center. I also noticed when working in the Master Gardener's greenhouses that they will have a good variety of cannas at

the Plant Expo on May 7 (watch for details later).

Do you have a gardening or insect question? Contact the Douglas County Master Gardeners at douglasmg@oregonstate.edu or 541-672-4461 or visit 1134 SE Douglas Ave., Roseburg. Douglas County Master Gardeners are trained volunteers who help the OSU Extension Service serve the people of Douglas County.