

FLOWER COMMON NAME & SCIENTIFIC NAME:

Lily of the Valley *liliaceae* / *Convallaria*

Advanced Master Gardener: Michelle Tullis

BEST VARIETY:

Convallaria majalis var. *rosea*, small pale pink flowers, not as vigorous as white-flowered species. *Convallaria majalis* cultivars with variegated foliage include: ‘**Albostriata**’, dark leaves with white to cream longitudinal stripes; ‘**Aureovariegata**’ (syn. ‘**Striata**’), gold stripes; ‘**Aureomarginata**’, cream-to yellow-edged leaves; ‘**Hardwick Hall**’, broad leaves with pale margins; ‘**Prolificans**’, unusually shaped flowers.

HEIGHT: 4 – 8 in / **WIDTH:** 3 – 5 in

HISTORY OR LORE:

Lily-of-the-valley has been cultivated since at least 1000 B.C., which is not surprising considering its unique and intense fragrance and ease with which it grows. The sole species in the genus, the type for its family, the Convallariaceae, is a low spreading perennial found over much of the northern temperate zone. Its vigorous rhizomes can colonize a large area and in spring produce bright green lance-shaped leaves and short-stemmed white flowerheads of bell-shaped blooms (a form with pale pink flowers is available), followed by red berries. Seventeenth-century herbalists recommended lily-of-the-valley to strengthen the heartbeat, and the plant does indeed contain glycoside compounds used in modern heart medications. All parts are poisonous.

HOW TO PROPAGATE:

A cool winter is required for proper dormancy so plant clumps or single pips (upright small root stocks) in November or December. The rhizomes, known as pips, are somewhat invasive in loose soil. Propagate by division. Can be potted for blooms indoors.

EXPOSURE NEEDED:

Plant in dappled shade / half sun.

SOIL TYPE:

Plant in deep, rich, moist, well-drained soil with ample humus.

CULTURE (FERTILIZER, WATER, PRUNING OR PINCHING?):

Grow in cold hardiness zones 3 – 9.

DISEASE OR INSECT PROBLEMS TO WATCH FOR?:

Subject to anthracnose, leaf spots, root-knot nematode and lily-of-the-valley weevil. Leaf spots seem to be the most troublesome.

PLANT INTEREST (BLOOM TIME / SEED HEADS / FALL COLOR?)

Spring-early summer-flowering, fragrant whitish flowers. Ground cover; use as carpet between camellias, rhododendrons, pieris, under deciduous trees or high-branching, not too dense evergreen trees.