Zephyranthes spp. Rain Lily

Edward F. Gilman

Introduction

These dainty, funnel-shaped blooms pop up seemingly overnight after a heavy rain when grown in the wild, appearing in various shades of white, yellow, pink, rose, red, or orange (Fig. 1). In cultivation, rain lily will flower throughout the year if kept alternately wet and dry with the majority of blooms produced in late summer or early fall. The narrow, grasslike foliage blends in well in rock gardens, borders, or it can be used in containers.

General Information

Scientific name: Zephyranthes spp.
Pronunciation: zeff-fer-RANTH-eez species
Common name(s): rain lily
Family: Amaryllidaceae
Plant type: bulb/tuber; herbaceous
USDA hardiness zones: 7B through 11 (Fig. 2)
Planting month for zone 7: year round
Planting month for zone 8: year round
Planting month for zone 9: year round
Planting month for zone 10 and 11: year round
Origin: native to Florida
Uses: naturalizing; edging
Availability: grown in small quantities by a small number of nurseries

Figure 1. Rain lily

Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.


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**Description**
- **Height**: .5 to 1 feet
- **Spread**: .5 to 1 feet
- **Plant habit**: upright
- **Plant density**: open
- **Growth rate**: slow
- **Texture**: fine

**Foliage**
- **Leaf arrangement**: most emerge from the soil, usually without a stem
- **Leaf type**: simple
- **Leaf margin**: entire
- **Leaf shape**: linear
- **Leaf venation**: parallel
- **Leaf type and persistence**: deciduous
- **Leaf blade length**: 2 to 4 inches; 4 to 8 inches
- **Leaf color**: green
- **Fall color**: no fall color change
- **Fall characteristic**: not showy

**Flower**
- **Flower color**: orange; pink; red; yellow; white; rose
- **Flower characteristic**: summer flowering; fall flowering; spring flowering

**Fruit**
- **Fruit shape**: oval
- **Fruit length**: unknown
- **Fruit cover**: dry or hard
- **Fruit color**: unknown
- **Fruit characteristic**: inconspicuous and not showy

**Trunk and Branches**
- **Trunk/bark/branches**: not applicable
- **Current year stem/twig color**: not applicable
- **Current year stem/twig thickness**: not applicable

**Culture**
- **Light requirement**: plant grows in part shade/part sun
- **Soil tolerances**: occasionally wet; clay; sand; acidic; loam; slightly alkaline
- **Drought tolerance**: high
- **Soil salt tolerances**: poor
- **Plant spacing**: 6 to 12 inches

**Other**
- **Roots**: not applicable
- **Winter interest**: no special winter interest
- **Outstanding plant**: not particularly outstanding
- **Invasive potential**: not known to be invasive
- **Pest resistance**: long-term health usually not affected by pests

**Use and Management**
Growing in full sun or partial shade, rain lily is tolerant of various soils and is moderately salt-tolerant. Bulbs can be left in the ground over winter if they are mulched heavily, or they can be lifted and replanted in the spring.

_Zephyranthes candida_ has dainty, white, late-summer to spring blooms; _Zephyranthes rosea_ has rose-pin blooms in late summer; and _Zephyranthes sulphurea_ has soft yellow, mid-summer blooms.

**Pests and Diseases**
Propagation is by seed or division.

Problems include maggots and chewing insects.

Botrytis may be a problem.