

# *Belamcanda chinensis* Blackberry Lily<sup>1</sup>

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## Introduction

A beautiful, upright grass-like herbaceous perennial related to the irises, blackberry lily has strap-like leaves to 18 inches long borne on short, upright stems no more than about 2 feet long (Fig. 1). Throughout the warm months, bright orange-yellow flowers are produced at the top of the canopy and fill the landscape with warm color. Individual flowers last a day or two but new ones come out the next day during the bloom period. Fruit pods split and curl, revealing clusters of black seeds, hence the common name. Plants die back in the winter months only to emerge again in the spring.



Figure 1. Blackberry lily.

## General Information

**Scientific name:** *Belamcanda chinensis*

**Pronunciation:** bel-am-KAN-duh chin-NEN-sis

**Common name(s):** blackberry lily, leopard flower

**Family:** *Iridaceae*

**Plant type:** perennial; bulb/tuber

**USDA hardiness zones:** 5 through 10A (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:** not native to North America

**Uses:** foundation; cut flowers; mass planting

**Availability:** somewhat available, may have to go out of the region to find the plant

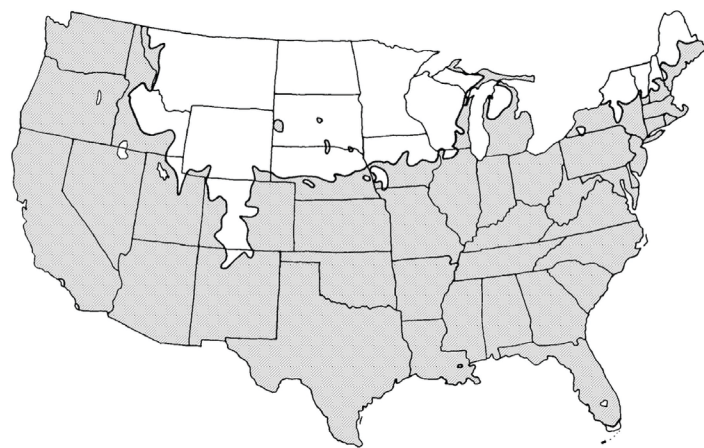


Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

## Description

**Height:** 1 to 2 feet

**Spread:** 2 to 4 feet

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**Plant habit:** upright  
**Plant density:** dense  
**Growth rate:** fast  
**Texture:** medium

## Foliage

**Leaf arrangement:** alternate  
**Leaf type:** simple  
**Leaf margin:** entire  
**Leaf shape:** linear  
**Leaf venation:** parallel  
**Leaf type and persistence:** not applicable  
**Leaf blade length:** 12 to 18 inches  
**Leaf color:** green  
**Fall color:** no fall color change  
**Fall characteristic:** not showy

## Flower

**Flower color:** yellow  
**Flower characteristic:** summer flowering; spring flowering; fall flowering

## Fruit

**Fruit shape:** pod or pod-like  
**Fruit length:** unknown  
**Fruit cover:** dry or hard  
**Fruit color:** black  
**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:** sand; acidic; slightly alkaline; loam; clay  
**Drought tolerance:** moderate  
**Soil salt tolerances:** unknown  
**Plant spacing:** 36 to 60 inches

## Other

**Roots:** not applicable  
**Winter interest:** no special winter interest  
**Outstanding plant:** plant has outstanding ornamental features and could be planted more  
**Invasive potential:** not known to be invasive  
**Pest resistance:** long-term health usually not affected by pests

## Use and Management

Blackberry lily makes an outstanding addition to any landscape. It makes a nice accent plant in a shrub border, and can stand alone in a low, ground-hugging ground cover. Plant it along a walk or in a mass near an entry way to attract attention. A large number of blackberry lilies massed in a landscape bed can make a dramatic impact on a landscape design.

Although flower production is best in full sun, one outstanding feature of the plant is its ability to produce abundant flowers in partial shade. Space adjacent plants about 3 feet apart to form a dense grouping. Several light fertilizations during the year will help growth and flowering.

A hybrid, *x Pardancanda*, usually called candy lily or leopard lily, has yellow, purple, rose, or white flowers.

## Pests and Diseases

Crown rot can kill plants if the soil remains too wet. Scorch causes the upper parts of leaves to brown and wither in the summer in the full sun without adequate soil moisture supply.