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Crinums Become Fashionable Again

by Lydia Holley

Although most species of crinums come from Africa, they have been sold in the United States as early as the late 1800's. For many years, large, showy crinums were the hallmark of a Southern garden.

Eventually, crinums fell out of favor with younger gardeners. It is hard to believe that these easy-care plants would not continue to stay popular, but a plants' fashionability may ebb and flow as often as skirt hems rise and fall.



Crinums are once again beginning to become popular, and rightfully so. Crinums will grow in almost any soil, although they prefer sandy conditions. They are also not picky about moisture levels, and can grow in extremely moist soil to soil that stays on the dry side. They thrive in our heat, and can fill a large corner with their floppy foliage and lily-like flowers. Although they are known as pass-along plants, once established, they are not the easiest to move or to pass along, as their bulbs can grow quite large, making them hard to dig up.

Crinums are usually grown as a stunning specimen plant, but they could also easily be grown as a hedge or in masses. A mass of blooming crinums would truly be a sight to see.

Crinums come in a variety of colors ranging from dark pink, striped, pale pink and even pure white. The red and white striped crinum, also known as Milk and Wine, is probably the most familiar of all the crinums. There are numerous species of crinum that are white with a red stripe, but most consider the Milk and Wine crinum to be the hybrid *Crinum x herbertii*. 'Ellen Bosanquet', with its beautiful dark pink blooms, is also well known. If you are interested in a crinum with an all-white bloom, try *Crinum x powellii* 'Alba'.

Whichever crinum you choose to plant in your garden, be certain it is one you will want for years. Crinums are so extremely long-lived, they most likely will outlive you.

I wrote several weeks ago about some plants that are still thriving in my great-grandmother's garden. A Milk and Wine crinum is one more plant in her neglected garden which reliably blooms each summer. It must have been an extremely fashionable addition to her garden when she planted it. Still growing strong, I wonder how many more generations will be delighted by its blooms.

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