

These Lilies Flower After Rains

Like everyone else, I suppose, I'm overjoyed to see the rains return to central Texas. Too many of the shrubs and young trees were really beginning to droop. Rain is always welcome.

Unlike most of you, however, one of the wonders that I most look forward to after a good soaking drought-breaker are the profusion of rain lilies that seem to magically appear afterwards. It's amazing that you can walk or drive by the same spot for months, and then three or four days after a good soaker the ground is covered with foot-high stalks that each offer up a single white lily to the sun.

These mass bloom events with the Rain Lilies or Cebolleta are mostly *Cooperia drummondii* but colonies may also include *C. pedunculata*. They are relatively frequent, happening a half dozen times or more per year, but one of the other "rain lilies," and in my opinion the more beautiful, blooms far less frequently and is always a pleasant surprise to find.

The Copper Lily, *Habranthus tubispathis* (also sometimes given as *H. texana* or *H. texanus*), like it's larger white cousin, only flowers after a good rain but seems to be much shyer about blooming. Conditions must be perfect before it will poke a flower stalk above the surface. As its name suggests,



Copper Lily (Habranthus tubispathis) blooms are deep golden yellow-orange with darker orange lines that converge on the center giving the flowers a deep copper bowl appearance.

this lily has yellow-orange flowers but is smaller and shorter than either of the *Cooperia* species.

Kissing cousins that they are, both the two species of Rain Lily and the Copper Lily begin blooming in the late afternoon and evening, flowers opening slowly overnight and appearing fully expanded first thing in the morning. The flower stalks appear directly out of the ground, arising from bulbs, and the foliage follows flowering. Each flower is only open for a single day.

I found a total of seven Copper Lilies in bloom last weekend in a fairly small area where I had never seen them before. I don't know whether this was because they used to be hidden in tall grass and I just never noticed them there or if it is a new site for them. When I checked the two other sites where I've seen blooms in the past there was nothing to see.

Five of the seven blooms are putting on seed so I'm waiting a bit before I transfer a few of them to a mass planting near (but not in) one of the demonstration gardens. After the seed is ripe, I'll disperse some of it where then plants are then dig up some of the bulbs and transfer them to a known location and sow the remaining seed around them. It should put on quite a show, someday.