

HOMES & Garden



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The delightful Crinum Lilies

Crinums are a fascinating group of large bulbs akin to Amaryllis. Garden designer and writer Elizabeth Lawrence said of the red- and white-striped Crinum lily, called milk & wine lily, "... it is one of the most beautiful crinums and one of the most satisfactory garden plants to be had, not particular as to soil or situation, and requiring no attention."

Probably about 130 Crinum species can be found, mainly in South Africa and the Tropics. They occur in a wide range of habitats, from aquatic to desert.

Though only one species is native to North America (Crinum americanum), these plants have become a symbol of southern gardens dating back to the early 1800s.

Brought to this country by various nurseries, many types were introduced in Florida in the early days. They came from the Caribbean, Holland, Germany and England. Most of the crinums are hybrids of the South African species, with Crinum bulbispersum as one parent.

Early plants in North Carolina included 'Cecil Houdyshel', C. x 'powellii', C. moorei and C. bulbispersum. There are a number of rather common hybrids of C. americanum, including 'Elsie' which Elizabeth Lawrence originally found in an Atlanta garden.

For many years now, these lovely flowers have been ignored by modern gardeners in the South. Yet there is possibly no other flowering perennial that adapts so well to either drought or wet conditions, all the while producing beautiful displays of fragrant, large trumpet-shaped flowers. They are one of the largest bulbs, producing wide, strap-like foliage that forms tall large clumps with a broad arching of leaves.

Crinums are very easy to grow, multiplying best in loose, loamy soil. They seem to thrive on neglect. Some find that if the foliage becomes really ragged, they can just cut it back and new, healthy foliage will soon appear. They make good companion plants for ginger lilies, elephant ears and caladiums.

Some of the outstanding cultivars include Crinum 'Hannibal's Dwarf', C. Lorraine Clark', C. 'Emma Jones', C. 'Ellen Bosanquet', C. 'Elizabeth Traub', C. 'Claude Davis', and Crinum americanum 'St. Marks'.

You can see Crinum lilies and learn more about how to incorporate them into your own summer gardens with Sarah P. Duke Gardens' July 23 field trip to the Holly Hill Daylily & Crinum Farm in Moncure. The trip begins at 9 a.m. at Duke Gardens and ends there at 1:30 p.m. The cost is \$25; \$15 for Garden Friends. To register, write to aleduc@duke.edu or call 668-1707.

The author, Alice Le Duc, is the director of Adult Education at the Sarah P. Duke Gardens.

A Family Affair

Joe F. Berini Construction Company Celebrates 50 Years



Story by REBECCA R. NEWSOME, MIRM

Very few would argue with the statement that 50 years in business is a true accomplishment. Add to the statement that a family business has prospered for 50 years and nothing short of a standing ovation is in order.

"It all actually started more than 80 years ago," says Dante Berini, president of Joe F. Berini Construction Company. "My grandfather was a stone mason in Pittsburgh who was lured to Durham in the late 1920s to utilize his skills in construction projects at Duke University. All five of his sons became involved in the building industry, including my father, John Berini. My grandmother persuaded my Uncle Joe to enroll in Duke University's Engineering School. Uncle Joe made her very proud when he graduated from Duke in 1939 and entered the field of commercial construction."

As the story goes, Joe was acknowledged for his abilities in the commercial field, but it didn't give him the total satisfaction he desired. He debated his options, and decided to blaze his own trail. In 1959 Joe opened the doors to a residential building and development company, Joe F. Berini Construction Co., Inc.

In the late 1950s, few residential builders and even fewer developers existed in Durham; Joe was a pioneer. He began development of his first neighborhood, West Hills, located in West Durham in 1961. Joe was in the right place at the right time... West Hills consisted of 41 homes and was completed in 1966. Joe found his niche.

During these early years of the company, Joe realized he needed help, and was pleased he didn't have to look far. Joe's nephew, Dante, was eager to learn and seemed to have a knack for the business. He began working with Joe in 1963 while seeking his business degree at East Carolina College

(now University). Upon his graduation in 1967, Dante came to work with Joe on a full-time basis. Dante's high standards, eye for detail and strong work ethic meshed perfectly with Joe's direction for the company. Together they developed Westwood Estates, a neighborhood of 243 homes; then other fine neighborhoods, such as Sun Pointe, Oak Daile, and Rocky Ridge. Located in North Durham off Sparger Road, Rocky Ridge is still in progress, with lots available for custom homes. More recently, Dante has been a partner in the neighborhood development of River's Edge, located off Rose of Sharon Road in Durham. The Berinis do not, however, need to develop a neighborhood in order to build in it. Croasdaile Farm, Fox Hill Farm, Hardscrabble, and Treyburn are but a few of the communities in which Joe F. Berini Construction Co. has built custom homes.

Dante acknowledges, "Along the way, I had the best mentors for aspects of the construction and real estate industries: My father, John, my Uncle Joe, and Bill Totten, our company's longtime real estate agent and friend."

Under Dante's guidance in 1985, the company joined the Home Builders Association (HBA) of Durham and Chapel Hill (now Durham, Orange, and Chatham Counties), where Dante served as an Executive Board Member for a number of years and President in the year 2000. Joe F. Berini Construction Co. has frequently been recognized with Gold, Silver and Bronze Parade of Homes Awards, honoring the company for its high quality work. On two separate occasions, first in 1995 and then again in 2000, Dante was recognized with the coveted "Builder of the Year" award from the HBA.

Two more key employees joined the company, with the addition of Dante's sons, Joe and Donny Berini. Joe began working for the company on a part-time basis when he was 14 years old; after studying

business and construction management at East Carolina University, he came to work for the company full time in 1992. Like Joe, Donny worked for the company on a part-time basis throughout his youth. Upon his graduation from East Carolina University with a degree in construction management, he went on to pursue the field of commercial construction. In 2002, Donny joined the family business. Like Dante, Donny has been active in the HBA, where he has served on the Board of Directors for the past several years. Donny is currently serving on the Executive Committee in the position of 2nd Vice President and will serve as HBA President in 2011. With the principles of their father, grandfather, great-uncle, and great-grandfather guiding them, Joe and Donny's quest for excellence in the construction industry runs far deeper than most.

"I can't begin to express the rewards I've experienced in being surrounded by my family at work," says Dante. "I know that our type of business wouldn't work for many families, but for us, it's been a blessing. Uncle Joe passed away in 2000... We strive to honor him and keep his vision alive in our work every day. There is no doubt in my mind that he would be very proud of Joe and Donny and the way they handle themselves in today's demanding marketplace, as well as the way the public perceives them."

Today, Joe F. Berini Construction Co., Inc. enjoys new home construction, residential remodeling and additions, and commercial construction projects, all primarily in the Durham County area. As previously mentioned, although many of the homes they build are in their own developments, they build in other neighborhoods and on individual homesites as well. Each home they build or renovate, regardless of its size or price, is custom crafted to meet client needs,

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New book demystifies organic gardening

Story by DEBBIE ARRINGTON

Fern Marshall Bradley has been preaching the organic gospel for decades.

A lifelong gardener and a University of California, Davis, alumna, she tends her own vegetables, fruit and flowers without resorting to chemical pesticides. She went "green" long before the word meant more than the color of her thumb.

Now, with millions of gardeners digging into homegrown tomatoes and other vegetables, Bradley has found that the demand for organic gardening advice is at an all-time high.

With Trevor Cole, Bradley edited the Reader's Digest "All-New Illustrated Guide to Gardening" (Reader's Digest Trade Publishing, \$35, 576 pages).

The "all-new" feature?

It's an all-organic edition and the most massive update of the popular tome since it was introduced more than 30 years ago.

"It took a good couple of years to complete," Bradley said in a phone interview. "So much of the book was reworked or completely redone. The older book had become a little too much out of date, so the decision was made to make the book all organic."

It was a logical next step. According to the National Gardening Association, about 43 million U.S. households will boast a vegetable garden this summer. Of that, an estimated 5 million will be all-organic. That number is expected to continue to grow as people try to reduce their carbon footprint and save money by growing their own produce.

Organic produce may be better for you, too. According to UC Davis research, organically grown fruits and vegetables may have higher levels of antioxidants than their conventionally grown counterparts.

"You have fewer worries about the safety of your food, too," said Bradley, noting recent salmonella outbreaks in commercial vegetables. "It's less scary. I know I can eat peas straight off the vine, and they'll be safe."

Bradley's large-format book contains more than 2,500 new photos as well as about 800 step-by-step diagrams and illustrations on such topics as how to support beans (string

See BOOK page D2

Fruiting plants that survive in dry conditions

Israel is often in the news, but rarely as the center of some of the greenest advances in modern agriculture. Without Israeli ingenuity, low-pressure drip irrigation would never have come into use. Today the emitter device invented there is the foundation for water-conservation gardening around the world.

But Israel is also hard at work testing fruiting plants from dry climates around the world. Its dwindling water supply demands new and innovative dryland crops that offer new types of food. Among the most promising fruits for arid-

zone American gardens is the apple cactus, *Cereus peruvianus*. This large, branching treelike columnar cactus produces some of the most delicious and beautiful fruits for gardens.

The species originates in Peru, which is evidenced by its botanical name. There it is known as pitaya. The plants have long contributed to the indigenous food supply. They were imported into Southern California long ago and are well established in both residential and botanical gardens.

Israeli farmers

received their original seed from the same California botanical gardens. In Israel, they were planted in a massive study to determine how varied a species it was in terms of both fruit quality and water demand. They didn't want cuttings because these would be all identical clones of the parent plant. Only by growing from seed could the agronomists find the best producers, which would become their parent stock. Cuttings from these outstanding individuals will be the progenitors of Israel's

See DRY page D7



Apple cactus produces foot-long nocturnal blossoms that open equally as wide to receive bats, moths and bees. (SHNS photo courtesy Maureen Gilmer)

Pillow talk

We all know that to get a good sleep, we need a good mattress. But what about a good pillow? Yes, very important.

Did you know that, traditionally, straw was used as a filler for pillows? Straw-filled pillows are cheap but not too comfortable. Feathers and down are the most expensive and usually the most comfortable. They offer softness and have the ability to conform to shapes desired by the user, more so than a foam or a fiber pillow. Allergies, you say? There are hypoallergenic down pillows available in the market today.

The American Down and Feather Council has a list of tips for purchasing just the right pillow for a good night's sleep. Let's explore.

Should you choose down pillows, feather pillows or a combination of both? If you want to feel like you're resting on a cloud, a 100 percent down pillow is the way to go. If a slightly firmer feel is preferable, go for a blend of feathers and down. Still dreaming of a firmer pillow? A 100 percent feather pillow is suggested. There are also pillows that are combined of a core of supportive feathers with an outer section of down.

The problem most people encounter with down or feather pillows is that the points of the down or feathers poke through the fabric. Not pleasant. The construction of the pillow covering is what to look at to get a pillow that will be more pleasant to sleep on. Tightly woven fabrics with a thread count of 230 or more will help keep those plumes from poking through. The council also tells us that double-needle-sewn construction prevents leakage and produces durable pillows.

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Loft living: Designing your raw, industrial space

Story by ERIN CONROY
AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — The towering ceilings, massive floor space and industrial-sized windows of your new loft may leave you wondering where to start when it comes to the interior design. Planning the layout and decor means finding the right balance to accentuate the charm of your raw, open space without it feeling cold and empty.

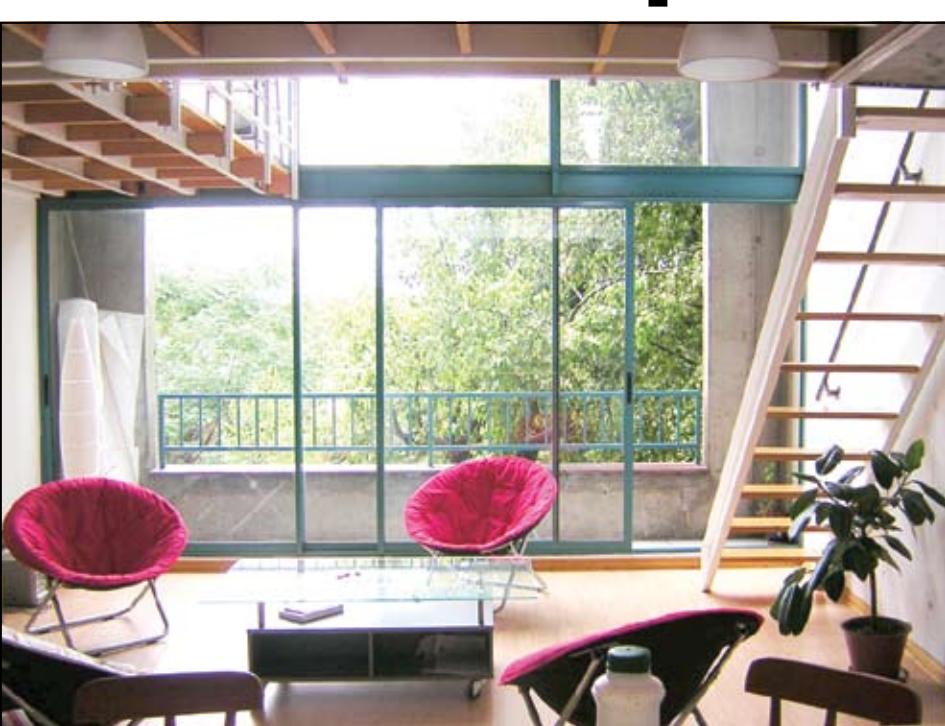
The key to making your loft warm and inviting, designers say, is giving the original architecture a personal touch while keeping clutter to a minimum.

"It should be clean and sophisticated, but in general I think lofts should have a more casual feel to them," said Shawn Henderson, an interior designer based in New York City. "It's a casual way of living."

Lofts first became popular in the 1960s, primarily in Manhattan's SoHo neighborhood, according to Alexander von Hoffman, a senior fellow at Harvard University's Joint Center for Housing Studies. Artists filtered into what was then considered a grungy area and rented space in old warehouse buildings.

"Loft living came into fashion as people in certain circles would rent the space, legally or illegally, and install plumbing for their own uses while the building owners might look the other way," von Hoffman said.

Slowly, buildings once considered commercial were recognized by the city as residential. Real estate developers started to buy up industrial space, rehabilitating it to accommodate those well-



heeled who wanted to get in on the trend.

In other cities like Chicago, San Francisco and Atlanta, large job growth in the 1980s and 1990s drove younger people downtown, slowing a historic trend of suburban migration. Meanwhile, companies wanting to expand their operations built modern offices, overlooking smaller spaces that were eventually converted to apartments.

Eventually, builders capitalized on the popularity of lofts by constructing buildings industrial in size and design in tony areas.

"What began as a hip trend among artists and creative types that was intimately related to this fashion of in-town living is now something we see in suburban development," von Hoffman said.

EATING WHERE YOU SLEEP

These days, a loft is generally defined as a living space with large

dimensions and an open floor plan that combines common areas with private ones, usually with high ceilings and exposed pipes and ducts.

Furniture may be your best tool for dividing common areas from more intimate corners, like sleeping quarters or a study. Area rugs are also a great way to define certain living spaces.

An armoire, if the wood is finished on all sides, has a classic look and would function as both an organizer and a partial wall for a bedroom, said Candace Ord Manroe, senior design editor for Tradition Home magazine.

Home furnishing company IKEA has a wardrobe planner that, if strategically placed, could serve as a freestanding room divider. Called the Pax/Komplement system, prices range from \$200 to \$900 and the pieces are available in various combinations of oak, birch veneer, aluminum and glass — frosted,

mirrored, high-glossed or transparent.

For something more upscale, New York-based 3form Material Solutions offers lightweight panels that are translucent, three-dimensional and woven together. Partitions start at about \$800 a piece.

Draping fabric from exposed pipes or beams is an affordable way to emphasize the loft's character while at the same time directing movement within the room.

"The most important thing is creating flow between the different zones within your loft, with more access from the entrance to the kitchen and socializing areas, and less access to storage and private areas," said Mats Nilsson, creative director for IKEA.

Leslie Rose, an interior designer for Jenkins Baer Associates in Baltimore, suggests installing tracks on the ceilings for fabrics or large doors so that they can slide away when the occasion calls for it.

"For most people, a loft is multifunctional," Rose said. "Sometimes you want that wide, open space, especially when entertaining guests. Other times, you just want your privacy."

HARD-WORKING FURNITURE

Because the space is gaping, it can be difficult to hide your mess. That's why every piece of furniture should be discreetly hard-working, said Ord Manroe. Beds should be raised above small shelves and drawers to create storage space. Foot rests should be ottomans and an old trunk can be used as a coffee table.

Slender shelving units and bookcases are also great to store personal items, especially if they're lined up along a single wall. Freestanding shelving units from IKEA, Home Depot Inc. and Lowe's Cos. run roughly between \$20 and \$1,300.

To partition off the kitchen, a roll-away island or utility cart can be a good addition. Kitchen islands at IKEA run between \$59.99 and \$549, while Home Depot sells them between \$109 and \$1,349 and Lowe's prices range between \$45 and \$1,200. To avoid a clumsy dining room table and create a more intimate area for eating, Rose suggests putting a kitchen banquet in a corner nook.

The dimensions of spacious living quarters can sometimes be overwhelming, Rose said — especially if you find you've taken two steps into what feels like the middle of the room. She's used a built-in wall of closets at the loft's entrance to create a foyer that doubles as a massive storage area.

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Berini *continued from page D1*

utilizing quality materials and skillful expertise. Remodeling and addition projects by Joe F. Berini Construction Co. include homes less than 10 years old to homes over 100 years old. To the delight of numerous homeowners, the Berinis have enlarged, updated, or reconfigured existing homes to meet changing needs. The commercial construction work of the company is focused on private businesses. Whether a design-build project, negotiated project, or competitive bid project, the Berinis assure their clients are walked through

each building phase, understanding what is expected of them to make each job successful while meeting budgets and schedules.

To have survived 50 years in business, it's evident that superior building is a way of life for the Berini family. Their goal is to insure that their clients enjoy the building process and benefit from the more than 80 years combined experience of their team. The guiding Berini principles have been to build each structure as if they were building it for themselves, and to

proudly stand behind their workmanship. These principles have served them and their clients well.

"We would like to thank all the people who've been a part of our company over the years, our clients, and Durham, for making our fifty years in business very enjoyable," says Dante.

Let the vast experience of Joe F. Berini Construction Co. go to work for you! To learn more about this company celebrating fifty years in business, call (919) 383-4793 or visit www.berinibuilt.com.

Book *continued from page D1*

(tepees, nets or poles) and how to remove lawn for a vegetable bed (skim off the sod, then stack chunks, grass side down, to decompose).

She covers not only vegetables but also all manner of flora, from groundcovers and ornamental grasses to rock gardens and shade trees, reflecting newer plant introductions and current gardening tastes.

"People are growing a lot more herbs and sunflowers," she said. "Even in a small garden, you can create a good environment for beneficial insects such as bees, and these days, everybody is concerned about bees."

Forty pages are devoted to common plant disorders and pests, but all recommended treatments are environmentally friendly alternatives to traditional pesticides.

"There's a whole body of science behind this information," Bradley said. "Chemicals sprayed on gardens end up in the groundwater. They affect the water we drink and the food we eat as well as wildlife. ... This is a much healthier approach."

Bradley, a former gardening editor for Rodale, knows her subject well. A resident of upstate New York, she co-authored the Reader's Digest book

on "Vegetable Gardening" and conceived and edited "The Organic Gardener's Handbook of Insect and Disease Control" and "The Expert's Book of Garden Hints."

This summer, she and her husband are tending a 2,000-square-foot vegetable garden, "the biggest I've grown in years," she said.

The taste of fresh-picked, straight-from-the-garden vegetables is worth the effort, she said. Many gardeners know the joy of backyard tomatoes, but what about Brussels sprouts, turnips or beets?

"They're so delicious, not anything like what you get in the supermarket," she added. "We tried (Japanese) hakurei turnips, harvested at the size of golf balls and roasted with a little olive oil. Vertus turnips (a French heirloom) are also great, very white and very sweet. Now, we're hooked."

For beginners, planting turnips is very easy. Instead of using rows, Bradley recommended preparing a little patch of ground, 8 by 24 inches. Scatter the seed and cover lightly with soil, only a quarter-inch deep, then mist with water.

"The turnips come up in a solid mass," she said.

"I never thin; I just harvest as they mature. That thins naturally."

Planted in the spring and again in the fall, the turnips can be used for greens as well as roots.

Bradley uses that method for several vegetables, such as radishes, lettuce, salad greens and carrots.

For vegetables, flowers and lawns, she recommends making "compost tea." Put a shovelful of compost in a burlap bag. Put a gallon of water in a bucket. Dip the bag into the water like a giant tea bag and let it steep for one to two hours.

Remove the bag (you can use that compost in the garden) and bottle your "tea" in a sealed gallon container for future use. Mix 1 cup compost tea with 1 gallon water to feed a mature rosebush or shrub, or a planter box of tomatoes. (Always wash your hands after handling compost.)

"It's wonderful on lawns, too," she said. "It not only feeds the plants but boosts beneficial microbes in the soil. You're helping build healthy soil."

And that's key to organic gardening success.

The author writes for the Sacramento Bee.

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