



Rain Lilies for Central Florida

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Rain lilies are defined by two genera: *Zephyranthes* and *Habranthus*. There are about 70 known species and more than 80 cultivars and hybrids. Originating in the Americas, they are grown in zones 7 through 10 and are often seen growing wild along highways and medians. The original species' colors (white, pink, mauve, and yellow), have been augmented by those of the cultivars and hybrids (salmon, orange, and red).

In 2008, Dr. Geoffrey Denny at the University of Florida Gulf Coast Research and Education Center in Balm collected three varieties of *Habranthus* and nine varieties of *Zephyranthes* with the intent to study the performance of these varieties in central Florida. Through a partnership with Dr. Marina D'Abreau, urban horticulture extension agent and Master Gardener volunteer program coordinator in Hillsborough County, Florida, two Master Gardener volunteers—Diane Schwaninger and Roger Rixom—carried out the work directed by Dr. Denny (and subsequently by Dr. Deng) and biological scientist Nancy West.

METHODOLOGY. An irrigated 8 ft × 32 ft topsoil bed was divided into 182, 1 ft × 1 ft sections (7 wide and 26 deep), and the clumps of each variety were planted in a random fashion. An Osmocote Plus extended release fertilizer (15–9–12) was applied at the rate of 1 tablespoon per clump at the beginning of each 30-week growing season starting on 1 May 2009 and 2010. The

study identified four performance criteria: frequency of flowering, length of flowering season, growth factor, and resistance to climatic conditions.

OBSERVATIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS. Based on the outcomes reported in Table 1, the following varieties of rain lilies are recommended for central Florida: *Zephyranthes candida* (pale pink/white, stands up well to weather, strong grower with extended prolific flowering); *Z. grandjax* (pale mauve, late prolific flowering); *Z. traubi* (white, extended prolific flowering, strong grower, wilts in rainfall); and *Z. grandiflora* (purple, very large flowered, strong grower, not prolific flowering but very showy).

FUTURE WORK. The study will continue through year 3 with a reduced replication (three per variety) to make the count and measurement less labor intensive. In addition, some initial studies will commence on some more modern hybrids. At the start of year 3, approximately 1500 *Z. candida* bulbs will be incorporated into a nitrogen requirement study at the Gulf Coast Research and Education Center. Several new varieties with larger and more colorful blooms have been obtained from an overseas source. A hybridization program is in its early phase to improve the bloom quality of *Z. candida*. The Master Gardener volunteers will collaborate with Dr. D'Abreau to develop a fact sheet and other relevant educational materials for central Florida residents.

Table 1. Outcomes: Flowering performance ratings of 12 varieties of rain lilies for central Florida.

Code	Plants (no.)	Through 30 weeks Flowers/plant (no.)		Growth factor		Flowering season (wks of 30-wk program)		Notes
		2009	2010	2009	2010	2009	2010	
H	13	8.57	27.57	1.10	1.82	7 to 20	6 to 21	
HB	7	2.14	7.86	1.56	2.64	N/A	6 to 18	
HT	7	5.29	23.29	1.26	0.20	4 to 20	6 to 26	
Z	24	0.96	42.71	1.84	1.55	N/A	6 to 20	
ZC	16	14.25	164.94	1.46	2.44	8 to 26	7 to 27	Good cold and wet weather resistance
ZF	23	7.70	23.43	1.66	0.81	9 to 26	4 to 20	
ZGF	5	3.80	9.20	1.09	0.18	N/A	N/A	Very large showy flowers
ZGJ	24	11.75	61.91	1.64	1.62	6 to 26	6 to 26	
ZJ	2	5.50	15.00	0.02	0.55	N/A	N/A	
ZL	18	5.56	22.89	1.37	0.73	7 to 26	6 to 26	
ZR	6	5.33	18.50	2.35	0.90	N/A	N/A	
ZT	29	16.00	87.30	1.80	1.81	5 to 25	4 to 26	Flowers wilt in wet weather