**Checker Lily (Fritillaria affinis)**

Lily Family

**Why Choose It?**

Most gardeners, or even non-gardeners who just appreciate flowers are familiar with the showy members of the Lily family. The Pacific Northwest abounds with representatives of this family, and many of them are choice subjects for local gardens. The Checker Lily, or *Fritillaria affinis* is one of the most charming of this very attractive group.

**In the Garden**

Checker Lilies are ideal for sunny woodland edges, grassy meadows or rock gardens. They tolerate light shade and can grow to three feet, producing whorls of leaves along the stem. The flowers are a nodding bell shape and can be quite variable, ranging from deep purple to mottled yellow and green to almost solid pale yellow.

**The Facts**

While not the easiest native plant to get established, once you have these in your garden, you will be the envy of all your gardening friends. They grow from small bulbs, and prefer open sunny areas, where they get little or no summer water, so keep them away from lawn areas. They prefer a humus rich, well drained woodland soil. Checker Lilies are known to “take a year off” from blooming, so it is best to plant several in one area. They multiply by means of bulblets, or offsets that resemble grains of rice and are sometimes called Rice Root Lilies.

**Where to See It**

Checker Lily has a wide range along the west coast, from southern British Columbia, through Washington on both sides of the Cascades, into Oregon, but interestingly only west of the Cascades there, and down into California. It grows primarily in open, dry woodland, or in grassy areas and on open bluffs.
And in addition:

The bulbs and bulblets are edible, and were used by Coast Salish people who steamed or boiled them. It should also be noted that Checker Lilies are not as abundant as they once were so they are better left undisturbed where you see them growing naturally. They are available from native plant nurseries throughout the Northwest. For native plant sources, go to the Washington Native Plant Society website, wnps.org, click on Landscaping, and then Native Plant and Seed Sources.

You can find out more information about native plants, including where to buy them, from the Washington Native Plant Society.

www.wnps.org
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