

You are viewing one of thousands of biographies – click below for more, including Search box and access to Plant associated organisations.

[Plant Biographies](#)

[Bibliography](#)

---

### *Lilium grayi*

**ROAN LILY** is a bulbous annual or perennial. Native to eastern North America it has flaring, yellow-based, centrally purple-spotted, red flowers that are purplish-brown marked on the outside.

It is also known as Gray's lily, and Orange bell lily.

This plant is considered to be endangered in the wild.

*Grayi* commemorates an American botanist and plant collector, Asa Gray (1810-1888) who was professor of natural history at Harvard University from 1842-1873. He corresponded with Darwin and supported his theories argued in *The Origin of Species*. He, with Dr. John Torrey (1796-1873), described the hundreds of plants collected on United States government expeditions, and his herbarium contained over 200,000 specimens. In 1864 he presented Harvard with 2,200 botanical works for the University's library. He was President of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences from 1863-1873. In 1872 he was president of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. He became a foreign member of The Royal Society in London in 1873 and from 1874-1888 was regent of the Smithsonian Institution. He was also a corresponding member of Linnean Society of London and an honorary member of societies in many other European centres The Gray Herbarium at Harvard (which was established by him) is named after him, and in 1984 the American Society of Plant Taxonomists named their highest award, which recognises a living botanist who has displayed the greatest career achievements, the Asa Gray Award. For some years he edited American Journal of Science and he also contributed articles and biographical sketches of eminent scientists to scientific journals. He published many works including *Darwinia: Essays and Reviews pertaining to Darwinism, Natural Science and Religion, Botany of the United States Pacific Exploring Expedition, Structural and Systematic Botany, School- and Field-Book of Botany, Synoptical Flora of North America, Manual of the Botany of the Northern United States, from New England to Wisconsin and South to Ohio and Pennsylvania Inclusive* (otherwise known as *Gray's Manual*).

The shape of the flowers suggests to authorities that it is pollinated by humming birds (although apparently this has never been witnessed). [Perhaps this is an appropriate observation for a plant said to be named after Asa Gray. In the mid-19<sup>th</sup> Century he was a strong supporter of the famous English naturalist, Charles Darwin (1809-1882) and his new theories on evolution which received so much ridicule at the time they were published. The foregoing proposition is reminiscent of an explanation posed by Darwin in 1862 about the star-of-Bethlehem orchid (*Angraecum sesquipedale*) – which roughly 40 years later proved to be correct.]