

Lilium martagon

[Synonyms : *Lilium caucasicum*]

MARTAGON LILY is a bulbous perennial. Native from eastern Europe to Mongolia, it has unpleasantly scented, often dark spotted, pink to rose-purple flowers with long red stamens and separated petals that curl back like the toe of a traditional Middle Eastern slipper.

It is also known as Black lily, Common turk's cap lily, *Giglio martagone* (Italian), *Kirmizi zambak* (Turkish), *Krollilja* (Swedish), *Lalia zlatohlavá* (Slovak), *Lilie zlatohlavá* (Czech), *Lis Martagon* (French), *Llyisiau Martagon* (Welsh), *Martagão* (Portuguese), *Martagon* (English, French), *Martagon común* (Spanish), Mountain lily, Purple turk's cap lily, *Türkenbund* (German), *Türkenbundlilie* (German), and Turk's-cap lily.

The flowers are scented at night when they are pollinated by night hawk moths.

Warning – martagon lily is poisonous.

This is a protected species in Europe.

Martagon is, for some authorities, a local name for this species, and for others it is Turkish (particular kind of turban).

In Mongolia and Siberia the edible bulbs are often dried in the sun and eaten with cow's or reindeer's milk. They are also eaten by the Cossacks of south-eastern Russia.

According to some authorities this species was probably the 'lily of the field' referred to in the Christian *Bible* (although the term is likely to have embraced any striking blossom in order to illustrate the argument).

It is believed to have been introduced to Britain in the last half of the 16th Century, during the reign of Elizabeth I, and is said to have been particularly popular as an ornamental plant during that late Tudor period.

Medicinally, the bulbs have been used locally for treating fluid retention.