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Lilium regale

[Synonyms : *Lilium myriophyllum*]

ROYAL LILY is a bulbous perennial. Native to western China it has large honeysuckle-scented, rose or purplish backed, yellow-throated, white flowers.

It is also known as King lily, *Lalia* (Slovak), *Lilie královská* (Czech), and Regal lily.

Regale is Latin (royal, regal) meaning ‘royal or of outstanding merit’ with reference to the flowers.

Royal lily was discovered by Ernest Henry Wilson (1876-1930) on his second trip to China on behalf of the English nursery, Veitch & Sons. It was found in the deep rocky gorges on the borders with Tibet in 1903 and the following year it was introduced to Britain. On this occasion he sent home about 600 bulbs. Later in 1910 he collected ten times that number for the Arnold Arboretum in Boston, USA – and authorities comment with awe on the complications of his journey with them back to the West (not least the fact that porters had to carry the carefully dug up, dried and packed bulbs on their backs and by river to Shanghai two thousand miles away, but also that Wilson himself had to be carried or helped on crutches as well as he had broken his leg.). It is even more amazing to learn therefore that the bulbs were lifted in October 1910, they arrived in Boston (via a sea journey to Vancouver then overland by train) in mid-Spring of 1911 – and produced flowers there in the July and seeds in the following October.