

CHOCOLATE LILY

Alutiiq: Láqaq

Gitksanimx: Gasx

Lingít: Kóox

Tanaina: Qinazdli or Qinaydli

Unangam tunuu: Saranaĕ

Latin: *Fritillaria camschatcensis*

Common name: Kamchatka fritillary, wild rice, Indian Rice, or northern rice root

Chocolate Lilies can be identified by their distinct flowers, which are bell-shaped at the base and open to a star shape. The flowers are rich chocolate-brown to dark mahogany, typically with yellowish stamens and yellow spotted markings. Chocolate Lilies are especially identified by their pungent smell. The plant typically grows from 8 to 12 inches or 20 to 30 centimeters in the wild.

In western North America, Chocolate Lilies are commonly found in moist meadows, loamy soil, open to the sky, and near streams. Rice Lilies were traditionally cultivated in estuaries and can also be found there now.



ROOT SYSTEM

This plant is called Indian Rice because the root system consists of a pearly white bulbous structure with many smaller fleshy bulblets that snugly fit around the core and have an appealing geometric pattern. The cluster of bulblets that create a larger bulb structure stores energy and nutrients, enabling the plant to survive in varying conditions.



LEAVES

The plant features narrow, lance-shaped leaves that grow in a whorl around the stem. They have a smooth texture and a glossy appearance. Generally, two to three levels of leaves skirt the stems



FLOWERS

The flowers are drooping and bell-shaped at the base and open to a six-petaled star. They can appear solitary or in pairs and bloom from spring to early summer. Three seed pods are arranged in long, papery shafts with two chambers that fit together. They are full of small, dark seeds that are typically dispersed by wind or animals. When the seeds are ready to harvest in late summer, they are loose in the papery cups, roll around, and resemble a natural rattle.

USES

- Medicinal
 - It has tannins, which are phenolic compounds that are astringent and helpful against drying maladies by producing mucus in the gastrointestinal tract. Tannins are anticancer, antiviral, antioxidant, antimicrobial, and anti-inflammatory. Tannins have applications such as being anti-diabetic, wound healing, cardiovascular protection, and antidiarrheals.
- Cultural
 - Indian Rice is a culturally significant plant as a primary carbohydrate. Some Indigenous communities cultivated estuaries to produce high yields in quantity and size of bulbs.
- Culinary
 - The bulblets are typically processed and cooked because when it is raw, it is very bitter and dry.



HARVESTING

The proper way to harvest chocolate lilies is to dig an area around the stalk, generally a foot in diameter. When the bulbs are identified and found, Indigenous ethno-herbalism says to scatter some of the bulblets in the area and cover them with the disturbed dirt and plant material. Using the bulblets to repopulate the plants will shorten the duration of bulb production compared to using the seeds. The germination of seeds to harvestability is five years, while bulblets will grow into harvestable bulbs in two to three years.

Harvesting is best done in late summer when the foliage begins to die or has died back entirely. It is a singular stalk with papery rattle seed pods on top. These seed pods look similar to the Iris seed pods; however, they are shorter, the pod walls are thinner, and the root system morphology is entirely different.

IDENTIFICATION is KEY

Chocolate Lily seed pods look like Iris seed pods; however, the morphology of the roots is entirely different. Avoid eating the raw bulbs and bulblets in high quantities because very large amounts of tannic acid can cause stomach irritation, nausea, and vomiting.