




Family: Liliaceae 

Popular name: sword lily

Origin: South Africa

Flower colour: almost any colour you can think of

Flowering period: July - September

Average plant height: depends on the type, 50 - 100 cm

Planting depth to base of bulbs: 10 cm

Spacing between bulbs: 12 cm

Type of bulb: corm

Light requirements: full sun

Landscape uses: borders and as a cut flower in the vegetable/cut flower garden

Gladiolus is one of the four most popular summer-flowering bulbs. People use them either for the garden or as a cut flower in the summer months. The gladioli we know are all hybrids, and have been in culture since 1841. It is difficult to identify and count original species, but some botanists believe there are close to 300. Gladiolus is easy to hybridise, so new plants appear

every year as old ones decline in popularity. A lot of the common large-flowering varieties were hybridised after 1940 in England and the Netherlands.

The butterfly-types were introduced in 1951, and over the last twenty years American hybrids have become more common.

We can classify the large-flowering gladioli into the following groups:

**Large-flowering gladiolus:** This is the most important group, based on the quantities and range of varieties available. In the Netherlands several hundred varieties are cultivated in many colours and colour combinations.

**Butterfly gladiolus:** This group contains varieties in which the plants are not as big as the large-flowering gladioli, therefore the flowers are also a little smaller. The color of the flower is very often in strong contrast with the rest of the plant, and tends to look like a butterfly. Butterfly types are very suitable for cut flower production.

**Primulinus gladiolus:** These varieties originated from the yellow *Gladiolus primulinus*. This group can be recognised by the upper flower leaf which covers the other flower leaves, pistil and stamen as if it were a protective little cap. The heart of the flower is, for this reason, difficult to see.

Besides the large-flowering gladioli you can find small-flowering gladioli in the following groups, all available in various colours:

*Gladiolus colvillei*

*Gladiolus nanus*

*Gladiolus tubergenii*

The leaves of the *Gladiolus* are sword-shaped, hence the common name 'sword lily'.

### **Principal varieties:**

There are many, many large-flowering varieties available in a wide assortment of colors.

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