



Sego Lily

Calochortus nutallii

Lily Family (Liliaceae)

Zones: 3-8

Full Sun

Low Water

Location: Natural Area and surrounding foothills

What could be more fitting for Red Butte Garden's Native Plant Days than a tribute to our state flower, the Sego Lily? Adopted in 1911 as the state flower because of its exquisite beauty as well as its food value to the Native Americans and early settlers, this sentinel of late spring can be found in all Utah counties as well as other states. The Sego Lily, scientifically known as *Calochortus nutallii*, is the most widespread species within the *Calochortus* genus. This species was named after Thomas Nuttall, a naturalist who collected the Sego Lily in 1811 on a trip along the upper Missouri River.

The Sego Lily is quite captivating when it is in bloom. The three broad petals come in white, cream or lavender with a yellow base and are brightly streaked or spotted with purple. These bright colors attract various pollinators such as beetles and bees. Pollinators can find their reward in the dense patch of hairs at the base of the petals where small amounts of nectar are present.

Below ground, the Sego Lily has an amazing mechanism to move its bulb through the soil to an optimal depth. Following germination at or near the soil surface, the small bulb slowly moves deeper into the soil profile by contractile roots until it reaches a depth of 10 cm or more. The Sego Lily reproduces by seed and also vegetatively by bulbils at below-ground leaf axils.

There are many beautiful *Calochortus* species that are horticulturally available. you can find them on a brief search of the internet. Most *Calochortus* species need excellent drainage and no water during the summer months when the plant is dormant, thus making them great specimens for the xeriscaped yard!