

Red King Humbert canna lilies - Fall TO DO

Did you buy Canna's from The Park Ridge Garden Club this spring 2026? Here are some tips to keep you cannas this winter and use them next spring.

Park Ridge Hardiness Zone 6a, your tropical '**Red King Humbert**' canna lilies **cannot survive** the freezing Midwestern winter in the ground. To enjoy their brilliant red blooms and dark, dramatic foliage year after year, you must dig up their underground rhizomes and store them in a climate-controlled environment.

When to Dig Up

Timing is critical for your cannas to store enough energy for next spring.

The Cue: Wait until **the first light autumn frost** hits Park Ridge. This frost will blacken or brown the lush foliage. Do not panic—this is nature's signal that the growing season is over and the plant is entering dormancy.

The Window: Once the leaves die back, your 1-to-2-week harvest window opens. You must dig them up **after the first frost but before the ground freezes solid**.

2. How to Dig Up Your Cannas

To prevent mold or rot during storage, you must keep the fleshy tissue of the rhizomes intact.

- **Cut the Foliage:** Use sharp pruning shears to cut the stalks down to about **2 to 4 inches above the soil line**.
- **Give Them Space:** Use a **garden fork** rather than a sharp shovel, as tines are less likely to accidentally slice the rhizomes. Start loosening the soil in a wide circle roughly **10 to 12 inches away** from the base of the stems to avoid chopping off the growing tips.
- **Lift Gently:** Pry upward carefully, working your way completely around the clump until the root mass pops free.
- **Clean the Clump:** Lift the mass by the remaining stems and gently brush or shake off large chunks of dirt. Avoid banging them against hard surfaces to prevent bruising.

3. Curing and Winter Storage

Proper prep ensures the rhizomes stay dormant and healthy for 3 to 5 months.

- **Cure for a Week:** Place your lifted rhizome clumps in a dry, frost-free, shaded area (like a screened porch or an open garage) for **3 to 7 days**. This allows the outer skin to air-dry and form a protective "crust" that fights off winter fungi.
- **Inspect and Prep:** Trim away any soft, mushy, or clearly diseased sections with a clean knife.
 - **Pack Them Up:** Line a breathable container—like a cardboard shoe box, plastic crate, or open paper lawn bag—with newspaper. Lay the rhizomes down and pack them loosely in **slightly damp peat moss, vermiculite, or wood shavings**. The medium should be barely damp to the touch, not wet.
- **Where to Store in Park Ridge:** Place the boxes in a cool, dark, frost-free space that consistently stays between **40°F and 55°F**. A cool crawl space, unheated basement, or insulated attached garage works perfectly.

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Winter Care Checklist

Monthly Checks: Set a calendar reminder to check on your boxes once a month. **If Shriveled:** If the rhizomes feel light or wrinkly, lightly mist the peat moss with a spray bottle. **If Moldy:** If you spot fuzzy mold or soft spots, immediately cut out the affected pieces and leave the box open for a few days to let excessive moisture escape.

Spring

In the spring, once the threat of Park Ridge frosts has fully passed (typically mid-to-late May), you can pull them back out, divide the rhizomes, and plant them right back in your garden beds

Dividing your 'King Humbert' canna rhizomes is the easiest way to get free extra plants. The best time to do this is in the **early spring**, about **4 to 6 weeks before the last frost** in Park Ridge (around late March or April), right as you are waking them up from winter storage.

Some canna pictures from people who purchased our cannas last May 2026.

