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Daylilies

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Life begins the day you start a garden. - Chinese Proverb. To that I would add, "If you can't go to an art gallery to view beauty, visit a garden filled with your own daylilies."

Gardeners have their favorite flowers. Mine are daylilies. If there is a 'sure bet' perennial, it's the daylily. A perennial flower that thrives from northern Minnesota to Florida. Daylilies are not true lilies. It's botanical name, *Hemerocallis*, is derived from the Greek which means "beauty for a day or day beauty". The name is very appropriate as the flowers of most daylily varieties open in the morning and fade by nightfall. Some newer varieties open in the evening and remain open until the evening of the following day. Many of these night blooming plants are very fragrant.

Regardless of variety, each scape (flower stem) typically has several flower buds; thus a daylily plant may stay in bloom and remain showy for weeks. Some daylily cultivars will bloom a number of times during the summer. However, generally, daylilies have one main bloom period in summer, followed by intermittent, but less showy, bloom periods, often right up until frost.

Daylilies are like a loyal and faithful dog that greets you at the door and is always there for you. They are easy to grow, rugged perennials that adapt to a wide range of soil and light conditions. They establish quickly, grow vigorously, and survive northern Minnesota winters with little or no injury. In groups of 3 to 5, daylilies are ideal for landscape plantings, especially when paired with ornamental grasses and small shrubs. Daylilies are also the perfect plant for mass plantings along a fence or walkway where they'll grow a dense, almost weed proof display.

There are more than 35,000 varieties that feature a wide range of colors and blooms. These cultivars can be grouped in a number of ways; by bloom time (early, mid, and late), flower color (from white to purple), scape height (6 inches to 3 feet), and flower form (trumpet, double, ruffled, and recurved).

Daylilies grow best in full sun, with optimum flowering occurring with 6 or more hours of direct sun. However, some light shade bestows a benefit of inhibiting flower wilting during high temperatures. They should not be planted near trees and shrubs that are likely to compete for moisture and nutrients. Daylilies do best in a slightly acidic (pH slightly below 7.0), well drained, soil that is high in organic matter.

Daylilies can be divided every three to four years. The best time to transplant or divide plants is immediately after flowering or in the early spring; however, plants divided in the spring may not bloom the same summer. Divisions should have two or three stems or fans of leaves with all roots attached. Make divisions by digging up the entire plant and gently pulling the fans apart. Cut leaves back so five or six inches remain. Till the soil deeply and work in well-rotted manure or compost. Dig a hole large enough for the roots without bending or crowding and place the crown an inch or so below the soil line, then water thoroughly. Apply about an inch of water weekly, more for sandy soils.

Before growth starts in early spring, remove the dead foliage from the previous year's growth unless the leaves were showing leaf spots, then remove it in the fall. An annual fertilizer application, like a 5-10-10 for example, may be helpful in producing more flowers and a spring application of manure or compost is also beneficial. Remove seed pods after flowering to prevent seed production because the plant's energy goes into producing seed and therefore it will produce fewer flowers the following year.

Bloomers have a large selection of daylilies to choose from that range in colors from dark purple, orange, yellow, to almost white. The creative names of these flowers does not, in all cases, necessarily refer to color but in some, such as 'Early Cardinal, or Desert Flame" the name is very appropriate. In others such as "Happy Returns" the name is a sort of wistful description of a sunny, yellow flower and "Primal Scream" may be an allusion to it's deep orange color. Yet with others, such as Hyperion, there is no hint in the name to the lemon scent this flower emits or to the whiteness of it's blossom. Finally, other names just remain a mystery such as "Pardon Me" that seemingly don't offer a clue to any of it's attributes. Perhaps it was a 'pardon me' lucky accident by the plant breeder. Regardless of the names, there are a myriad of choices to be had at Bloomers. Happy gardening!