

Daylily Problems Abound in Area Gardens



Photo by Marie Harrison: Daylily can bring a vibrant splash of color in any sunny location.

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April 28, 2005

For many years, daylilies have been favorite garden perennials for gardeners. Fanciers and hobbyists can join The American Hemerocallis Society, and specialty daylily nurseries exist all over the country. Many gardeners delight in collecting as many different kinds as they can find.

Describing the daylily hardly seems necessary, for it is surely familiar to all gardeners. In most varieties, the flowers bloom for one day only, but since several are on a scape, bloom may last for weeks. Daylilies may be evergreen, semi-evergreen, or dormant, and are classified as early, mid-season, or late-season bloomers and by flower height, size, color, and shape. Some bloom during the day, and some at night. Others offer the extra benefit of fragrance. They may be tetraploid or diploid, and all colors except true blue and pure white have been produced.

Daylilies can be used in almost any landscape situation. They are, of course, widely planted in perennial beds and borders, but many are well-suited to container culture. Salt tolerance makes them ideal for use near bodies of salt water. They make an excellent groundcover when planted en masse.

Full sun to partial shade in neutral to slightly acid, organic, moist but well-drained soil suits daylilies best. They should be planted in a place where they will not have to compete with tree roots for water and nutrients, and they benefit from protection from hot afternoon sun in the Deep South .

Although drought tolerant, daylilies perform much better with at least one inch of water a week. Fertilize as growth begins in spring, and again just after the bloom cycle. Mulch, but avoid placing it near the crown. Divide clumps every three to five years for best growth and flowering. Plant new plants or divisions in groups of three about 12 inches apart, or plant them singly about 18 inches apart.

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Daylilies may be propagated by seed, but this is usually left to hobby gardeners or hybridizers. Seeds do not come true to type. Many years are required for a seed-produced daylily to be trialed and marketed. Most gardeners will have best results by dividing existing clumps or by planting proliferations that occur on the scapes of some varieties. Tissue culture is widely used by commercial growers.

Once thought to be the most carefree of perennials, a disease has cropped up that shatters that assumption. Daylily rust was found in the United States in Georgia and Florida in 2000, and has since spread to at least 21 states. The disease is spread by airborne spores and through the movement of plants. The rust is a fungus (*Puccinia hemerocallidis*), and can be treated with a variety of fungicides. Control requires a combination of sanitation, a regular application of approved fungicides, and selection of resistant varieties. (See the list below.)

Rust appears on the leaves as small, water-soaked spots. The spots expand and become raised to form a pustule in the center, which releases powdery spores that are easily transported by wind. Daylily rust spores are bright orange and are evident on both the upper and lower leaf surfaces. A good field test is to rub a leaf with a white facial tissue. If the rust is present on the leaves, an orange-yellow stain will come off on the tissue. The disease can be confused with other leaf problems, such as leaf streak disease. No orange stain will result on the tissue if the problem is leaf streak disease.

More detailed information can be found at <http://www.aphis.usda.gov/npb/daylily.html> and <http://doacs.state.fl.us/~pi/enpp/pathology/daylily-rust.html> and other sources. Call the extension office for specific recommendations if you suspect that your daylilies are infected with rust.

List of some rust resistant varieties:

Red Volunteer and Miss Mary Mary (All America Selections Winners for 2005),
Over the Top, Burning Embers, Fairest of Them All, Escargot,
Little Business, Mini Pearl , Butterscotch Ruffles, Mac the Knife,
Yangtze, Holy Spirit, Black-Eyed Stella, Lullaby Baby, Bitsy,
Frankly Scarlet, Plum Perfect

At a Glance

Hemerocallis Hybrids

Say: hem-er-oh-KAL-iss

Family: Liliaceae (Lily Family)

Other names: Daylily

Origin: China , Korea , Japan

Zones: 2-10

Light: Sun

Water Use Zone: Moderate

Size: 10-40 inches tall and clumping

Soil: Organic, well-drained

Salt tolerance: Excellent

