

DIG THIS By Peg Tillery (for 6-23-04) Daylilies, ©2005

June is Perennial Gardening Month. My perennial pick for this month is daylilies, great perennials for any garden. Check out the Hemerocallis selections at your favorite local nurseries or drive up to Port Townsend to B&D Lilies for a visit.

The All-American Daylily Selection Council (AADSC) is a daylily testing program with 18 test areas across the nation. Each plant is judged on 52 different characteristics and data is collected by each test-grower. The high standards set by the AADSC assures gardeners of a lily's performance. Visit the AADSC site at <http://daylilyresearch.org>. Here you can also visit the American Hemerocallis Society, Daylily Clubs and Societies, National Gardening Association and the American Horticulture Society, each one packed with abundant information.

Another site you'll want to check out is [www.snowdaylily.com](http://www.snowdaylily.com). This is the B&D Lilies (of Port Townsend) site. Contact them at 360-765-4341 or [sales@bdlilies.com](mailto:sales@bdlilies.com). B&D grows and sells numerous other lily cultivars. Their website is currently featuring several "Daylily Landscape Packages" on sale. There's also a gorgeous photo of a lavender daylily with a deep black-purple throat. Don't forget to check out their booths at the Northwest Flower and Garden Show or other Garden Shows and sales throughout our area.

In my quest for daylily information I found the American Hemerocallis Society site at [www.daylilies.org](http://www.daylilies.org). You'll find abundant information. It's a daylily tutorial so to speak. AHS prefers the term "daylilies" (one word). If you'd like to become a member of the American Hemerocallis Society contact Pat Mercer, AHS Executive Secretary, Department WWW, P.O. Box 10, Dexter, Georgia 31019 or email [gmerc@nlamerica.com](mailto:gmerc@nlamerica.com). Individual dues are \$18.00 per year or \$50.00 for three years. You'll receive a subscription to the "Daylily Journal" with your membership.

Daylilies belong to the family Liliacea and are related to onions and hyacinths. Most lilies belong to the genus *Lilium* but daylilies are in the genus *Hemerocallis* derived from the two Greek words "beauty" and "day." Even though each individual flower lasts one day, each daylily stalk (stem) (called scape) has multiple flowers that continue to flower for several weeks.

There's a daylily color for every gardener. You can find daylilies categorized in shades of yellow, red, pink, purple, melon or cream pink. According to AHS, colors are: "Yellow - all shades from the palest lemon, through bright yellow and gold, to orange; Red - diverse shades of scarlet, carmine, tomato-red, maroon, wine-reds and blackish-reds; Pink - from pale pink through rose-pink to rose-red; Purple - from pale lavender and lilac to deep grape or violet; and Melon or Cream-Pink - from palest cream shades to deep cantaloupe shades." Color intensities of some daylilies can change according to individual soil acidity or alkalinity.

Most daylilies range in price from affordable to expensive. One site has a Daylily for sale at \$250. Wow! Daylilies multiply quickly and need to be divided every few years so can be shared among friends. Daylilies do best in full sun, will tolerate part-shade, and especially like a minimum of six hours of sun per day. If you need a daylily for partial shade areas in your garden try the red and purple varieties which don't tolerate sun as well as the yellows, pinks and pastels. Daylilies need well drained soil and often rot in moist areas. If you'd like to grow daylilies but don't have quick draining areas try growing them in raised beds.

The AHS says "do not grow daylilies near broadleaf trees such as maples, poplars or beeches because the tree roots rob the soil of moisture and nutrients. Daylilies do perform well under pine trees because of the dappled shade and because there is no competition with the pine's deep root system."

Much of the daylily literature you'll find recommends planting in spring in the North. Even though we are "north" we're in a temperate area and can plant daylilies here in spring, summer and fall. It's our choice. If you receive your daylilies through the mail be sure to soak the roots in water for two hours before planting them. Most mail-order lilies will still have some of the leaves attached. Do not bury the crown any deeper than one inch below the surface of the soil when planting. Containerized plants are especially easy to tuck into a garden.

If your garden has frost pockets be sure to mulch around your daylilies in late fall. Dead daylily foliage acts as a great mulch too. Leave the leaves there to decay until spring. Be careful of emerging sprouts when cleaning up in the spring.

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