



Bucks Country Gardens

Daylilies: A Natural Beauty

USES AND CHARACTERISTICS OF DAYLILIES

Daylilies are useful and popular herbaceous perennials providing color, form and accent for the perennial border. They are one of the most extensively hybridized garden flowers- vastly improved over *Hemerocallis fulva*, the roadside daylily that's naturalized over much of North America.

Daylilies are an excellent choice for the beginning or advanced gardener. They are easy to establish, grow rapidly (but are not invasive) and are usually free of disease and insect pests. By choosing the proper cultivators the bloom period can be extended from late May to October. The buds on many cultivators will bloom for 4-6 weeks although each blossom on the flower stalk will open for only one day. Some cultivators, such as *Stella De Oro*, even have a tendency to develop new flower scapes periodically throughout the growing season.

Plants range in height from about 12 inches to nearly 5 feet and are classified as dormant, semi-evergreen or evergreen types. The dormant types (the most popular type in our area) are best suited to the Pennsylvania region. Some evergreen and semi-evergreen types can be grown successfully in the warmer parts of the South.

PLANTING GUIDELINES

The Daylily blooms best in full sun but will tolerate some shade during the day. They are well adapted to a variety of soil conditions, as long as good drainage is provided-especially during the winter. Planting can be done either in the spring or late summer. However, if planting in late summer, be sure to set new divisions or fans by early September so that a new root system is established before winter. Winter's freezing and thawing conditions may heave plants out of the ground and damage your daylily.

Plantings can be established by dividing existing clumps every 4-5 years, buying dormant fans, or by planting containerized plants- which are available in Bucks Country Gardens' perennial houses. When dividing your own, lift clumps early in the spring (or in early fall) and separate fans. Each fan is composed of a shortened stem attached to enlarged, tuberous roots. Prepare the new planting site by incorporating a half-cup of a general-purpose fertilizer (such as 5-10-10 or bulb-tone) in the bottom of each planting hole. These low nitrogen fertilizers encourage quick root development for your daylily. Fans should be planted at the same depth as they originally grew. When planting dormant crowns in the spring, set them so that the crown is 1-2 inches below ground level, spacing plants 2-3 feet apart. Water thoroughly after planting and on a weekly basis thereafter until established. Continue yearly surface application of 5-10-10 or bulb-tone fertilizers at a rate of a half-cup.

WINTER PROTECTION/MULCHING

Winter protection for established, dormant-type daylilies is not necessary; however, some protection should be provided for late summer-planted fans or for evergreen and semi-evergreen varieties. A coarse mulch (such as wood chips) laid at 4-6 inches deep is adequate. Evergreen bough may also be placed over the plants to collect snow and reduce the temperature fluctuations that cause winter desiccation or heaving.