

**Friday's Feature****By****Theresa Friday**

May 17, 2009

**Dazzling, durable daylilies**

Daylilies are popular perennials. Serious gardeners know them by their scientific name of *Hemerocallis*, Greek for "beauty" and "day." It is true that individual flowers last only one day, but new buds on the flower stalks open almost daily. Sizeable daylily clumps with numerous flowering stalks can remain in bloom for an entire month.

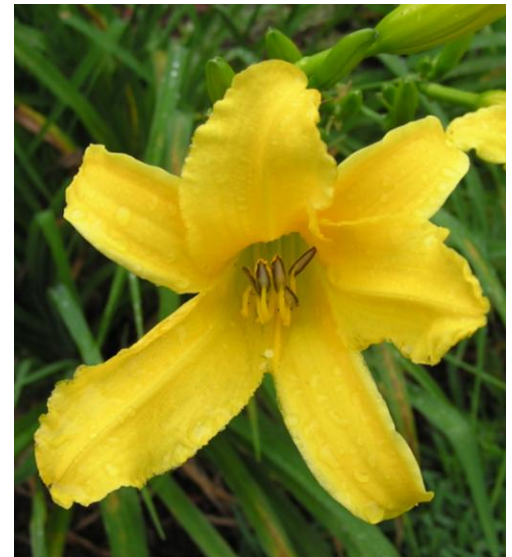
The modern varieties of daylilies have been developed from native Chinese species. Early settlers from Europe and Asia brought many of the original species with them to America. During the last 75 years, hybridizers in the United States and England have made great improvements in daylily varieties.

Daylily varieties are classified by several factors, including flower color and plant size. One important classification now commonly used is hardiness type – dormant, semi-evergreen or evergreen.

Dormant daylilies offer little if any resistance to low temperatures, and foliage will disappear in the winter until new growth emerges from the soil the following spring. Semi-evergreen varieties have foliage that dies down briefly in early winter, but new growth starts re-emerging slowly until more rapid re-growth starts in early spring. Evergreen daylilies are commonly used in commercial landscaping efforts. These varieties maintain foliage through the winter in the warmer climate of the Gulf South.

Many new flower forms and flower colors are now available. Almost every color is available with the exception of pure white and blue. Flowers can also have multiple colors on a single bloom. Flower shapes also vary including full doubles.

They typically reach a mature height of 1-5 feet, depending on the variety. Flower size can range from small flowers no more than 2 inches across to large flowers 8 inches across.



Daylilies grow in clumps, and bloom heaviest in spring and early summer. Your daylily planting can make the biggest impact in your landscape if you group together multiple plants of the same color. Groups of daylilies provide spots of color and a soft texture to any landscape setting.

Daylilies can be low-maintenance plants. Plant them in full to partial sun. Daylilies prefer a well-drained landscape bed but can tolerate poorer soil conditions. Make a slightly raised bed for daylilies by incorporating organic matter. Adjust the soil pH so that it is slightly acid (6.0-6.5) Fertilize in early spring and again in early summer, if needed, to promote plant vigor.

One valuable benefit of daylilies in the landscape is their ability to multiply. Daylilies increase in size from year to year and can be divided almost any time of the year to produce new plants.

In 2000, an introduced airborne fungus called daylily rust began to attack daylilies nationwide. It will not kill an otherwise healthy plant but will make it quite unsightly and decrease its performance. The most obvious symptoms of daylily rust are yellow to brown streaks and small, very bright yellow spots on the surfaces of the leaves. Small, orange to yellow spots on the undersurfaces of the leaves contain pustules that release numerous dust-like, orange-colored spores. As symptoms progress, leaves turn yellow and dry. Take a white facial tissue and rub it across the affected area. If a yellow-orange stain appears on the tissue, that's a sign your plant has daylily rust.



Management strategies for daylily rust include growing varieties that are resistant to this disease, cutting off infected foliage and removing it from the garden, and periodically spraying susceptible plants with fungicides. Contact your local Extension Service on more information on how to control daylily rust.

Theresa Friday is the Residential Horticulture Extension Agent for Santa Rosa County. The use of trade names, if used in this article, is solely for the purpose of providing specific information. It is not a guarantee, warranty, or endorsement of the product name(s) and does not signify that they are approved to the exclusion of others.

For additional information about all of the county extension services and other articles of interest go to: <http://santarosa.ifas.ufl.edu>.

###