

Growing Daylilies

The botanical name *Hemerocallis* is derived from 2 Greek words meaning “beauty for a day” since each bloom lasts only one day. To compensate for this single day, there are many buds on a scape (stalk) and many scapes in a clump, so the blooming period extends over several weeks. To further extend the bloom season, different daylily varieties may bloom early, mid or late season. Here in South Carolina, early season begins the middle of May and late season begins the middle to the end of June. Reblooming can vary depending on weather and growing conditions.

Daylilies were introduced in the Orient as a food source, so the entire plant is edible. Blooms and buds can create a tasty and decorative addition to a salad. Plants were imported to England in the 1760’s and later to America. Hybridizing began mainly in the 1930’s with the common yellow and orange daylilies. Today, there are over 80,000 registered varieties with colors ranging from near white, pink, lavender, orange, coral, yellow, red, purple, bicolors, blends and near black. Forms may include circular, triangular, ruffled, recurved, trumpet, spider and double. Bloom size varies from 1.5” to over 12”, with heights from 8-60” tall.

- Sun – At least 6 hours of direct sun a day. Darker colors may prefer some afternoon shade.
- Soil – Organic and well drained. May tolerate poor soils but amend heavy clay for drainage.
- PH – Average 6.0. Get soil tested by Clemson Extension Service.
- Water – Greatest need is in spring when buds are forming. Will tolerate drought.
- Perennial – Returns every year as a larger clump.
- Foliage Habit – Dormant in winter with foliage dying down semi evergreen (herbaceous).
- Spring Cleaning – Remove dead foliage prior to emergence of new growth.
- Fall Cleaning – Cut back foliage to 6 inches and dispose of cuttings. Clean up any old foliage around plant base. You will see new foliage growth in about a week.
- Division – Every 5 years or when clumps become overcrowded. Best in September October. Dig clump and pull apart at its natural divisions. Use screwdriver or fork to loosen. Do not cut into the crown of the plant as this may encourage crown rot. Replant new divisions 12-18” apart and water in well so there are no air pockets around the roots.
- Deadheading – Remove spent blooms for aesthetics. Not proven to affect plant growth or rebloom.
- Seed pods – Keep seed pods picked to prevent seedlings from germinating. Seedlings will not be a clone of the parent plant.
- Fertilizer – Slow release 10-10-10 in April and September. Apply phosphorus when dividing.
- Pests – Aphids, mites and thrips. Spray with insecticidal soap and encourage beneficial insects. If necessary, spray with a systemic insecticide.
- Deer – Place garlic, cayenne pepper or coconut shampoo around base of plants. Taste and smell deterrent. May need to reapply after heavy rain.
- Disease – Leaf streak and rust. Spray leaf streak with fungicide or remove affected leaves. Leaf streak is a yellow and brown streaking on foliage. Plants with daylily rust should be isolated and cut completely to the ground. Do not compost. Rust is characterized as an orange powder on plants and is spread airborne.

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