

## **HOW TO GROW DAYLILIES**

Daylilies *hemerocallis* spp. are a perennial providing a rainbow of colorful blooms from white to black. The width of the blooms can be as small as 3 inches to 7 or more inches wide. The flowers rest on leafless stalks known as “scapes” that stand above the foliage. The scapes can be 10 to 66 inches high. Given proper attention, they will multiply on their own. The best varieties for the South are evergreen and semi-evergreen. Dormant varieties are better suited to colder climates.

### **SOIL**

Daylilies adapt well to a variety of soils from clay to sand. Ideally, well-drained moist, fertile loamy soil. The best way to create this soil environment is to add 2-3 inches of compost, mushroom compost, leaf mold, well-rotted manure, pine mulch or peat. The use of these types of organic matter increases earthworms to keep the soil aerated and decreases reliance on commercial fertilizers. When growing daylilies in pots if not dividing yearly the introduction of earthworms will break down the soil which may become non-porous and muddy.

### **SUN**

Daylilies thrive in full sun with the exception of the darker colors which are better suited to morning sun and less exposure to hot, afternoon sun.

### **WATER**

During the growing season – spring through early fall – the soil should not be allowed to dry out completely. Make sure the plants get about 1 inch of water each week to encourage feeder root production. If rainfall is insufficient or you see foliage wilting or discoloring, water as needed to maintain damp to moist roots and soil. Deep soaking less frequently is better than an everyday splash from a watering can. In the winter dormant season, with slower evaporation and no active growth, be extra careful not to over-water. Too much water from constant rain or over-watering can promote root rot and plant diseases. Watering daylilies in pots or planters: These daylilies will require more attention to watering. Use the finger test each day to check soil moisture. Provide water when the top inch or two of the soil has dried. After a week or two of daily testing, you will know how often to water. Keep the seasons in mind – more water in the summer, less in the winter. Watering daylilies with an automated irrigation system: Set your timer to water during the early morning hours as evening watering can lead to fungus and other foliage diseases. During the first few weeks after planting, check soil moisture often and adjust irrigation to maintain moist soil. During the bloom season overhead watering in the morning will cause discoloration to the blooms. An alternative to morning watering is to water later in the day with enough time left in the day for the plants to dry or hand watering below the bloom height.

### **FERTILIZER**

Green Edge, Milorganite or other bio-solids can be applied year-round without the worry of burning the plants. A low-nitrogen fertilizer will stimulate root growth rather than foliage. In the

spring an application of a granular high nitrogen fertilizer is recommended to stimulate fast growth. Water-soluble fertilizers are also recommended in conjunction with granular fertilizer.

## **WHEN AND HOW TO PLANT**

Daylilies can be planted any month of the year in warm climates. Daylilies can also be moved during the bloom season which aids in color groupings and scape heights but may reduce the number of blooms. Excess foliage and scapes, however, should be cut off for quicker recovery. Apply a layer of mulch – pine straw or decomposed leaves and grass clippings – but do not cover the crown of the plant. If you want a dramatic showing of blooms, plant 18 inches apart. If you want to plan for growth, space about three feet apart. Dig a hole the size of the roots. If the soil is sand or heavy clay, add organic matter. Make a cone-shaped mound just below the surface of the soil and place the crown on this mound and angle the roots outwards. This reduces the possibility of root rot. Water when the hole is two-thirds full then replace the rest of the soil with the crown (where the roots and foliage meet) no deeper than one inch below the soil. Leave a slight depression to make watering easier. Cut the foliage back to 6-8 inches and water. Never plant too deep because you can stunt growth.

## **MULCHING**

Mulching has the desirable advantage of retaining moisture and discouraging weeds during the summer months. Do not let the ground dry out for it is nearly impossible to wet the ground unless you remove the mulch. Successful mulching can be done with any number of materials such as pine straw, old sawdust, pine bark, wood shavings and chips, decomposed leaves, and decomposed grass clippings. The mulching material should be about 1-2 inches after it has settled. Be sure to check the soil Ph yearly if using mulching materials and do not smother the crown with mulch material.

## **DIVIDING PLANTS**

Some daylilies respond to division every two to four years. Waiting longer causes overcrowding which may reduce the health of the clump. Cut the clump apart with a knife if necessary. The best time of year to divide and transplant is early to mid-fall as it will promote better spring blooming. Water the transplants often. If introducing potted daylilies into your garden it is recommended to remove them from the pot and thoroughly wash the roots to preclude the introduction of any unwanted weeds or seeds.

## **PESTS AND DISEASES**

Daylilies have few insect problems. Attacks of aphids (spring), thrips (summer), slugs, or spider mites (summer) can be controlled by insecticidal soap, or try introducing ladybugs into the garden. Rust and streak are fungal issues. Thrips – control with Orthene, Pyrethrin, or rotenone but spray multiple times soaking both the tops and bottoms of leaves. It's best to spray while plants are full of buds. A rust prevention regimen is recommended to establish a preventative spraying program at the onset of the growth season using products such as Fertiloam II and Advantage 3 in 1. Other products are also available at your local garden centers or through the

Internet. It is highly recommended to only use chemicals with caution by reading and following product directions.