

## The Daylily: The Perfect Plant?

Without a doubt, daylilies (*Hemerocallis* spp.) are well adapted to our Okanagan climate. The word used to describe their flexibility is 'tolerant', for example 'tolerant of poor soils'.

I prefer the word 'embrace' or 'accept' to the word 'tolerant'. (Not to be political or anything ... but I feel the same way about accommodating variations in human characteristics too!)

Daylilies embrace all kinds of cultural conditions. In the Okanagan, many face rocky or clay soils, sun for more than eight hours each day, and a dry environment. Not a problem for daylilies.

Daylilies also embrace full sun, light or partial shade, dry or moist soils and nutrient-poor or fertile soils.

However, the most variation in regard to the daylily is in the colour of its blooms: there is virtually no limitation to the palette. With the exception of true blue, every colour is represented in the hundreds of daylily cultivars. Most blooms exhibit at least two colours, such as Summer Dragon pictured.

Given the hybridizing work being done by propagators, it's probably only a matter of time before a blue daylily is available.

Daylily blooms are short-lived – not more than a day or two. (Thus, the name.) Fortunately though, their beauty can be extended through the summer now that 'reblooming' species are on the market.

Pardon Me (red), Stella d'Oro (yellow), Rosy Returns (deep pink), Summer Dragon, A Touch of Pizzaz (yellow and rosy red) are a few of the thousands of daylilies that bloom for weeks on end.

Yes, **thousands** of daylilies. Almost seventy thousand daylilies are registered with the American Hemerocallis Society. As gardening enthusiasts and professional horticulturalists continue to 'mix and match' daylilies this number will continue to grow.

The wide array of colours is matched by the variation in bloom time (early, mid, late season), plant height, and flower size. With some planning, you can have colour from daylilies throughout the summer.

Some daylilies are scented; some have ruffled petals. Some blooms are double (like two flowers in one); some have three or four markedly different colours in one flower.

Daylilies can be used a number of ways in the landscape: they can complement or contrast with the colours of other perennials, provide an interesting foreground to evergreens, suit a variety of garden styles, and can stabilize slopes to control erosion.

They do not suffer from any diseases or pests, are (usually) ignored by deer, and are easily dividable.

The best thing about daylilies? They are low maintenance and easy to grow – a great choice for both novice and seasoned gardeners.

-----

Last week I'd offered a \$25 Grasslands Nursery gift certificate to the first reader with the correct solution to a word puzzle. Congratulations Bob Shanks for your entry!

Here is my answer: LAWN → PAWN → PAWS → PANS → PONS → POND

-----

*Toni Boot is the founder and owner of Grasslands Nursery in Summerland, a nursery specializing in sustainable gardening. Comments and suggestions for future Water Wisdom columns may be directed to her at [grassnursery@telus.net](mailto:grassnursery@telus.net). Visit [www.grasslandsnursery.ca](http://www.grasslandsnursery.ca) to join our blog discussion.*