

Daylily

Hemerocallis (hem-er-o-kal-is)

Zones: All zones

Did you know a daylily flower only lasts 24 hours? The daylily derives from the Greek words “hemera”(day) and “kalos” (beautiful). The bloom opens at sunrise and wilts by sunset, only to be replaced by another beautiful bloom the next day. The daylily is possibly one of the hardest working plants in the garden. Not only is it striking beautiful, but it is tough, adaptable and virtually trouble free. They come in all sizes and colors. If left in place, they will grow into large beautiful clumps with deep fleshy roots. The leaves are large and sword- like. Clustered flowers are on long, leafless stems, which sit way above the foliage. Daylilies come in all variations of red, yellow, pink, purple, melon and creams. They also have many different blossom shapes. Painted lady, pictured above, is a larger variety, with a spider-like appearance. It’s a beautiful shade of red orange, with a yellow center. It is one of my favorites.

Daylilies, depending on the type, come in evergreen, semi evergreen and deciduous varieties.

Evergreen types will need mulching in colder regions. Semi evergreen types may not retain their leaves, but that depends on the zone in which they are grown. Deciduous varieties, which are the most hardy, lose all their leaves and go dormant.

Whatever variety you choose will adapt to almost any soil. Most varieties take full sun, but I have some in partial shade too. Daylilies, do fine in our San Andreas clay soil, but mine are on a slope. They prefer a well drained soil that has plenty of organic matter. They take moderate water, and I apply a foliar feeding monthly during the growing season. Clumps need to be divided every 5-6 years. Daylilies make wonderful additions to any garden. I warn you, once you see all the varieties you’ll easily become a “Hem Head” like me, and won’t be able to resist adding more to your collection.

Novella Springer, Calaveras Master Gardener

Photo, courtesy of Tony Able, Calaveras Master Gardener