



## How to Grow Daylilies

By: Julie Day



*'Stargate Portal' daylily shows off blossoms with purple, yellow, and white.*

If ever there was a competition for the “perfect perennial,” daylilies would be at the top of the list. Nearly carefree, pest and disease resistant, tough and adaptable, drought tolerant, and gorgeous, daylilies are perfect whether you’re planting a show garden or naturalizing an eroding hillside.

Here are some tips for selecting, planting, and caring for daylilies.



*'Jersey Spider' daylily arches gracefully toward the sun.*

## About Daylilies

Daylilies are clumping perennials with fibrous roots. They are not true lilies but instead belong to the genus *Hemerocallis*, which means “beauty for a day.” And while it’s true that daylily blooms last only one day, they make up for it by producing hundreds of blooms throughout the season.

With over 35,000 cultivated varieties of daylilies, the choices are mind-boggling! Planning a daylily garden can be great fun – I know one gardener who sought out daylily varieties named for her grandchildren, while other gardeners collect varieties with particularly unusual or surprising blossoms. Visit a daylily farm, or consult a mail-order catalogue, for interesting daylilies for your own collection.

When selecting daylilies for your garden, you have many choices, including:



*'Jean Swann' daylily.*

- **Flower color:** All shades of yellow, cream, orange, pink, red, and purple are available; along with multicolored varieties that can be bicolor, dotted, banded, edged, or tipped.
- **Flower type:** Daylily flowers come in various sizes and have many shapes, including circular, triangular, star-shaped, spider-shaped, and ruffled blossoms with single, double, or triple petals.
- **Bloom habit:** Both diurnal (day blooming) and nocturnal (night blooming) varieties are available.



*Triple blossom daylily.*

- **Bloom time:** Early to late summer, with classifications including Early, Midseason, and Late. Ever-blooming varieties are also available. In general, each plant will bloom for about a month, so choose a variety of bloom times for all-summer color.

- **Foliage habit:** Dormant (dying to the ground in the winter), Evergreen, and Semi-Evergreen types are available.
- **Size:** From 6 inches to 4 feet in height.



*'Spider to the Fly' is another multicolored daylily.*

## Growing Conditions

- **Hardiness:** Zones 3-9, depending on variety.
- **Soil:** Daylilies will grow in most any soil but bloom better if compost is added to improve drainage and nutrients.
- **Light:** Full sun (6 hours per day).
- **Moisture:** Drought-tolerant, but blooms better with an inch of water a week.
- **Space:** Daylilies don't like competition, and the clumps quickly spread to fill in large areas, so give them plenty of space.

American Hemerocallis Society



*My truck-bed daylilies (<https://www.todayshomeowner.com/truck-bed-gardening/>) not only lived, they bloomed!*

## Planting Daylilies

It's hard to go wrong when planting daylilies, but here's how to get the best results:

- You can plant them any time the soil is workable, although spring and fall are less stressful to the plants.
- Daylilies planted during the growing season might not bloom until next summer.
- Add some compost to the planting hole, and space plants 1-2 feet apart.
- Position the crown of the plant no more than an inch below the soil level.
- Water well, add some mulch, and watch them grow!



*'Indy Love Song' daylilies boast delicate creamy apricot blooms.*

## Caring for Daylilies

Again, daylilies are almost mistake-proof, but here are some tips for getting the most out of your daylilies:

- Apply compost, rotted manure, or balanced fertilizer in the spring when growth starts. Avoid high-nitrogen fertilizers – they'll encourage leaves instead of blooms.



- Use mulch (<https://www.todayshomeowner.com/using-mulch-in-your-garden/>) to keep weeds away and to hold in moisture.
- Deadhead (<https://www.todayshomeowner.com/video/deadheading-flowers/>) your daylilies by cutting off the entire flower stalk (called a “scape”) to encourage more blooms and to prevent seeds from forming. Daylily seeds do not produce the same variety as the hybrid parent plant, so allowing them to self-sow will result in a mix of blooms (and likely fewer blooms) next year.
- If your daylily foliage looks straggly in the heat of summer, clip it back to about 1 foot high, to encourage new leaves.
- Cut off dead foliage in the late fall or early spring.
- Daylilies are pretty good at crowding out weeds, but remove any as they sprout.



*A daylily border brightens up this front porch.*

## Dividing Daylilies

Daylilies quickly spread into larger clumps, and eventually they become so crowded that they do not bloom as well. You may want to divide your daylilies every few years, particularly if you notice fewer blooms.

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Here are some tips for dividing them:

- You can divide daylilies anytime during the growing season, but to ensure blooms next year, divide your daylilies right after they flower.
- For best results, dig up the entire clump of daylilies, cut the foliage back to about 6 inches, and pull or cut the clump into pieces with a sharp knife. Each piece should have several stems (or fans of leaves) with roots attached.
- For very crowded beds, you can also use a sharp shovel to divide off parts of plants without digging them up, although you'll have less control over the size and quality of the division.
- Plant the divided pieces in soil amended with compost, just as you would plant a potted daylily. Water well until the new plants are established. Throw away any pieces that seem unhealthy - don't worry, in time you'll have more daylilies than you know what to do with!



*Make sure divisions have several leaf fans and a clump of roots.*

## Further Information

- American Hemerocallis Society (<http://www.daylilies.org/>)
- Garden Guides: Daylilies (<http://www.dutchbulbs.com/resources/gardenguide/stepstosuccess/daylilies>) (Van Bourgondien)
- To explore the many varieties of daylilies, visit your local daylily farm or check out Wright's Daylily Garden (<http://www.wrightsdailily.com/>)

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