

Why Historic Daylily Gardens?

by Linda Sue Barnes

According to the AHS Display Garden page of the AHS website, “The purpose of an American Hemerocallis Society Historic Daylily Display Garden is to educate the visitor about historic daylily species and cultivars, their beauty, and how then can be used effectively in landscapes.” So what are historic daylilies? The Daylily Dictionary on the AHS website states, “Historic Daylilies - All daylilies registered on or before 1980. This is a “rolling” date, which extends by ten years every decade, i.e. in 2020, the date will change to 1990.”

The AHS Display Garden page gives the requirements for an AHS Display Garden. To also meet the requirements for an AHS Historic Daylily Display Garden the garden should “contain a minimum of 50-100 historic daylily cultivars and species....

Plant markers should be maintained in good condition, with the name of both the cultivar and the hybridizer showing clearly. Date of registration is often included on the marker as well, and must be included on the plant marker for historic daylilies.”

With those details out of the way we come back to the question of what good is a historic daylily display garden—or for that matter what good is a historic daylily?

I’ll answer the second question first from my point of view. Many historic daylilies have beautiful flowers. Many of the species and early hybrids are stars or trumpets, and that probably doesn’t excite a lot of daylily growers, but the simplicity of those flowers can provide a break from all the ruffles, fancy edges and patterns of the modern daylily.



‘Poinsettia’ (Stout, 1953)

The colors in some early cultivars are also very clear. ‘Poinsettia’ (Stout, 1953) is an orange-red spider that is a knockout in a clump. ‘Bess Ross’ (Claar, 1951) is another clear red. ‘Crimson Pirate’ (Sass-H.E., 1951) is a darker red with a hint of an even darker band and veining. ‘Luxury Lace’ (Spalding, 1959) is a soft lavender-pink bitone with a green throat.



‘Parfait’ (Childs-F., 1951)

‘Parfait’ (Childs-F., 1951) is a soft orange red/light yellow bicolor with a 4.8:1 spider ratio. ‘Hyperion’ (Mead-F.B., 1924), a clear yellow, might have been the best selling daylily before ‘Stella de Oro’ (Jablonski, 1975). One reason ‘Hyperion’ was so



‘Hyperion’ (Mead-F.B., 1924),

popular, in addition to growing very well, is that it is distinctly fragrant. By the way, according to the AHS definition ‘Stella de Oro’ is now a historic daylily. ‘Naranja’ (Wheeler, 1947) is a clear orange-gold. ‘Lilly Dache’ (Hall-D.F., 1957) is gold with the edges brushed red. In my garden it is an unusual form, but it is registered as a 4:1 spider. ‘Howdy’ (Bremken-Armstrong, 1949) is such a great little bicolor that it makes me smile when I see it. ‘Party Array’ (Branch, 1956), a small mahogany with white edges is another one that is just plain cute. People were “oohing and aahing” over it in a convention garden in Minnesota this year. The list could go on and on.



Curtis Barnes staring up at ‘Autumn Minaret’

Many historic daylilies have spectacular garden habit. ‘Autumn Minaret’ (Stout, 1951) is a late bloomer that can easily reach 6 feet with as many as 80 blooms on a scape; then it reblooms with up to 60 blooms on a scape. ‘Hesperus’ (Sass-H.P., 1940), the first Stout Medal winner in 1950, stands nearly 4 feet tall with very clear golden yellow flowers that often show unusual form traits. ‘Myrna’ (Saxton, 1948) is a dark red self that is well branched with a good bud count.

Continued on page 18



‘Bess Ross’ (Claar, 1951)

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It had better be good if it is named for the hybridizer's sister. 'Tinker Bell' (Stevens-J.C., 1954) is only registered at 30 inches, but it can have 40 or more buds with 5-way branching. Logically enough, most of the early cultivars that are still in gardens today multiply well and are very hardy.



Hemerocallis dumortierii is one of the extra early species. The brown sepal reverses are a key characteristic of the species.

Another reason to grow historic daylilies is to extend the garden season. I have species daylilies and very early cultivars like 'Elfin' (Stout, 1949) and 'Saratoga Springtime' (Saxton, 1976) blooming the first week or two in April. It's another month before more modern cultivars begin to bloom. 'Abbeville Sunset' (MacMillan, 1975) is an early with sunset pink blend of colors. 'Bitsy' (Warner, 1963), 18 inches tall with a bloom 1.5 inches, is registered as EE; but it reblooms and was still blooming September 12 this year with a few buds left.



'Bitsy' (Warner, 1963)

Photo by Curtis Barnes

'Jean' (McDade-Schreiner, 1943), a tall yellow and red bicolor, provides a bright spot in the late summer garden while 'So Lovely' (Lenington-G., 1969) is a near white for a softer feel. 'Autumn Prince' (Stout, 1941), a small yellow late in our garden, has the added attraction of being very fragrant.



'Ribbonette' (Lenington-G., 1951)

For the daylily show aficionado a good reason to grow heritage daylilies is that they win flower shows. 'Ribbonette' (Lenington-G., 1951), 'Sammy Russell' (Russell, 1951), 'Statuesque' (Stout, 1956), and 'Tinker Bell' are cultivars that I remember winning Best in Show in our region in the last few years. Many more have won Best in Section. A good way to win Sweepstakes is to grow and show a lot of heritage daylilies. Why? Often the scapes require no grooming other than cutting off spent blooms and freshening the bloom scars.



'Statuesque' (Stout, 1956)

Still another reason to grow some historic daylilies is that they can, even today, be good parents. Brian Mahieu has at least 28 cultivars with a species as a parent or a parent that is 1 generation from a species. He has many cultivars with plants from the 50s through the 70s in their heritage. He got vigor, clear colors, a lot of unusual forms, fragrance, and sometimes nocturnal habit from these parents. Gil Stelter uses the name Gryphon as a prefix for his tet introductions that are out of *H. fulva* varieties; there are 6 to date. The plants are robust and have good

plant habit. They must be winter hardy also since Gil lives in Guelph, Ontario, Canada.

A quick search of the Daylily Database showed 37 daylilies registered since 1996 that have *H. citrina* in their immediate heritage. Hybridizers using it in addition to Mahieu include Santa Lucia (5 cultivars), Stoneking-Jones, and Bachman. At least 6 hybridizers have used some variety of *H. fulva* since 1990 including Darrel Apps—'Slim Pickings' (1995). 'Just Off the Boat' (Apps, 2000) is directly from *H. thunbergii*. 'Notify Ground Crew' (Hanson-C., 2000) has tet 'Purity' (Traub, 1949) as the pollen parent.



Iron Gate Gardens Photo

'Look See' (Santa Lucia 2003)

(*H. citrina* x 'Siloam Ralph Henry') X 'Holly Dancer'

To be honest I sometimes buy, or my mother bought, a daylily just for its name. Admit it, haven't you done the same thing? I got 'Linda' (Stout, 1936) and 'Golden Linda' (Hughes, 1962) from my mother. I bought 'Honey Redhead' (Nesmith, 1942) and 'Double Redhead' (Miles-J., 1971). I saw 'Lovely Linda' (Offer, 1976) in a convention garden in Louisiana and I've been looking for it ever since.



'Linda' (Stout, 1936)

'Pendragon' (Wynne 1960) was bought to go in our King Arthur bed along with 'Lancelot' (Fleishel, 1963) and 'Merlin' (Saxton, 1955) and a variety of other classic plus some modern daylilies. I've also got a children's bed and Bible bed with plenty of heritage daylilies.

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'Pendragon' (Wynne 1960)

Photo by Rebecca Hinshaw



The 1920-1979 section of the daylily garden at Franklin Park Conservatory and Botanical Garden is directly in front of the conservatory filled with exotic plant life and artwork, including a collection of glass works by artist Dale Chihuly

Last year during the 2012 National Convention the Ohio Hybridizer Historic Garden at the Franklin Park Conservatory was one of the tour gardens. They had beds labeled by decades and also several beds dedicated to Ohio hybridizers. In addition to the daylilies there was also a wonderful conservatory; a variety of display gardens made up the rest of the complex. It's definitely worth a stop if you are in Columbus, OH



LaVere Webster's historic bed

LaVere Webster in Rochester Hill, MI, has his historic plants in one long bed along one edge of his garden. You walk by species plants then historic daylilies planted by year of registration. You can really appreciate the changes that have been made in daylily cultivars since the first one, 'Apricot' (Yeld 1893), was registered when compared to the more modern cultivars he has in other beds in his garden. There are 20 Historic Display Gardens, including one in Europe, in 2013; I have only visited 4 of them, but I would love the opportunity to see more of them.

Of course I am most familiar with the Bettie Jernigan Historical Daylily Garden at Cape

Fear Botanical Garden in Fayetteville, NC. Two of the eight beds in the garden are devoted strictly to historic daylilies. The bed denoted as the classic bed begins with several species then historic cultivars planted by year of registration. The Stout Silver Medal bed begins with 'Hesperus' and has the Stout medal winners planted by year of the award. In both cases there is the strong feel of seeing the change in daylilies as you walk down the beds. The other six beds are designated by size or form, but each bed has as many of the specialty awards as we have been able to find for that size or form so that there are early minis, smalls, doubles, spiders, etc. as well as more modern cultivars.



'Hesperus' (Sass-H.P., 1940)

The last reason I believe that Historical Daylily Display Gardens are a good idea is to give some appreciation to the early hybridizers. Joyce Johnson Rouse wrote a poem entitled "Standing on the Shoulders." One of the lines of the poem is, "I am grateful for their vision, for their toiling on this Earth." I am grateful to George Yeld, Willy Mueller, Luther Burbank, Amos Perry, Arlow Stout, Elizabeth Nesmith, Hugh Russell, George Lenington, LeMoine Bechtold, Henry and Hans Sass, Frank Childs, Edna and Elsie Spalding, Bob Kennedy, Ethel Smith, Stanley Saxton, Bill Munson, Pauline Henry, John Lambert, Rosemary Whitacre, Steve Moldovan and the many others who registered those daylilies we now call historic daylilies. Without the efforts of those early hybridizers modern hybridizers wouldn't have the gene pool they have to work with. The best of the efforts of the early hybridizers deserve to be maintained.

The examples above give pretty good reasons to have historic daylilies in your garden, but why should we have historic daylily gardens? I am not a historian, but I think that in almost any walk of life it is important to know something about how we got where we are. To me walking through the Bettie Jernigan Historical Daylily Garden or the other AHS Historic Daylily Display Gardens that I have visited is like taking a walk through time. NDSU Plant Science Dept. Historic Garden in Fargo, ND, was the first officially designated AHS Historic Daylily Display Garden, though the Bettie Jernigan Garden was in existence several years earlier. The NDSU garden obtained a large number of cultivars from growers of historic daylilies across the United States and have a large enough space that the garden can continue to expand.



Curtis and I attended the grand opening of the NDSU Historic Garden. Geraldine and John Couturier and Mary Baker are on the right. The young lady on the left is a caretaker of the garden.

All photos by Linda Sue Barnes except where noted

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'Beauty to Behold' (Sellers, 1978)



'Fait Accompli' (Lambert, 1975)



'Apricot Angel' (Holman, 1963)



'Double Sunset Glow' (Miles-J., 1968).

Historic daylily cultivars from Region 15 hybridizers

Photos by Linda Sue Barnes