

MORE IS BEAUTIFUL

Extending the northern bloom season (Part 1: Earlies and lates)

By Mike Huben
Region 4, Massachusetts

Daylily bloom in the north is radically different than in the south, and the difference is the heat. We don't have it. Instead, there is a very short growing season with too little heat to produce rebloom in most varieties that are registered as rebloomers.

In the north, a long daylily bloom season requires one of a few strategies: early and late varieties, bud building varieties or northern rebloomers. In addition, a long bloom season requires cold morning opening (CMO); what good is a season extending variety which will not open in the cool temperatures at the beginning or end of the season?

For the purposes of this article, the north is defined as heat zones 5 and lower. We're all familiar with the USDA hardiness zones, which are based on winter low temperature. But there's another zone system, the American Horticultural Society Plant Heat-Zone Map found on the internet at: http://www.ahs.org/pdfs/05_heat_map.pdf. This measures the warmth of the growing season (and is very similar to measures of growing degree days.) The more heat, the more growth and bloom we can get from modern daylilies. Heat zones 5 and lower cover Canada, New England, the Great Lakes and northern border states, the

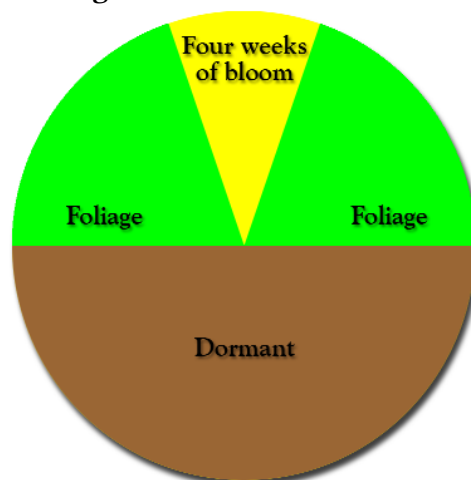


Pacific Northwest and parts of a few other states. The lists of varieties in this article are mostly based on observations from my heat zone 4 garden.

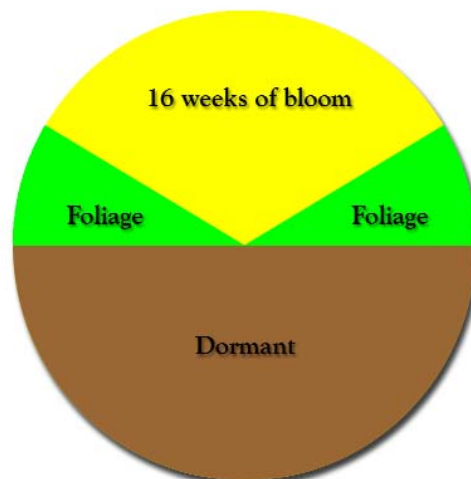
The peak season in the north is usually about 3 or 4 weeks (see the Typical peak figure): but what is the possible season? Just how far can we extend the season? With adequate watering, but without any new breeding, the season in heat zone 4 can last from approximately late May (when the earliest species bloom) until mid September (when cold temperatures slow the latest daylilies to a standstill); about 16 weeks (see the Possible figure). Quite a few northern gardens exhibit this lengthy season, and the catalogs of many northern growers (such as Tranquil Lake, Olallie, and Bloomingfields) help customers with lists of early, late, and reblooming varieties.

Daylily growth and bloom in the warmth of the south is so different that southern registration information is often unreliable in the north. Bloom season, rebloom, and budcount are all important for an extended bloom season in the north, but these are the least reliable registration information from south to north. Southern daylilies almost always bloom in mid season up north, no matter whether they are registered extra early or late. Rebloom is unreliable or rare in the north for southern-bred rebloomers.

Typical northern daylily garden annual bloom



Possible northern daylily garden extended annual bloom



Earlies ▶

Pictured:

- 1: *Hemerocallis* 'Blueberry Trumpets' (Sobek, 2005)
- 2: *H.* 'First Rose of Summer' (Sobek, 2005)
- 3: 'First Twilight' (Stamile, 2005) **Photo by Ellen Laprise**
- 4: 'Ice Trumpets' (Huben, 2007)
- 5: *lilioasphodelus*
- 6: 'Moonlit Masquerade' (Salter, 1992)
- 7: 'Orange Prelude' (McEwen, 1974)
- 8: 'Pinegarden Wendy Ann' (Seaman, 2001)
- 9: 'Prom Flower' (Marvin, 2005) **Photo by Ellen Laprise**
- 10: 'Pure And Simple' (Salter, 1993)
- 11: 'Spring Storm' (Guzinski, 2004)
- 12: *yezoensis*

Not pictured:

- Hemerocallis* 'Arms To Heaven' (Roberts-N., 2001)
H. 'Chateau D'if' (Lambert, 1990)
dumortieri
 'Folklorico' (Lambert, 1970)
 'In Strawberry Time' (Sobek, 1995)
 'Isolde' (Lambert, 1981)
 'Jolly Lad' (Spalding-W. 1980)
middendorffii
 'Me First' (Marvin, 1992)
 'My Darling Clementine' (Salter, 1988)
 'Olive Bailey Langdon' (Munson-R.W., 1974)
 'Rose Prelude' (Bennett-R., 1988)
 'Saratoga Springtime' (Saxton, 1976)
 'Season's Greetings' (Benz, 1991)
 'Spring Frolic' (Apps, 1995)
 'Stenciled Impressions' (Stamile, 2002)
 'Tandy' (Webster, 1993)

And it has been observed that as high-bud-count southern varieties are moved north, they tend to decline in budcount by roughly 5 buds per zone until they reach a minimum between 10 and 15 buds. You can duplicate all these observations in most northern tour gardens. Are there exceptions? Of course, but they are few.

Earlies and Lates

The daylily bloom season has traditionally been extended with early and late varieties. Early and late species have been available from the beginning, and many of the older early and late hybrids are excellent plants, still widely grown.

There have always been debates about the

See Longer season, page 12

Earlies



Photos by Mike Huben
 unless otherwise noted

**Longer season
continued from page 11**

value of early and late daylilies. On the plus side, there is a longer season. Earlies can bloom with the June perennial peak bloom and lates can bloom in August and September when many perennial gardens are at their nadir.

On the minus side, many earlies and lates are plain, species-like yellows. Because earlies and lates don't bloom at daylily peak season they can't be entered in shows and won't be seen on garden tours.

The Early and Late Robins have selected phenological markers (plants whose bloom times mark the progress of the season) for the beginnings of the northern daylily bloom seasons. *Hemerocallis* 'Stella De Oro' (Jablonski, 1975) is defined as the latest EE (Extra Early) bloomer; EE is anything with FFO (first flower open) before 'Stella'. E (Early) is anything with FFO before H. 'Mary Todd' (Fay, 1967) and after 'Stella'. L (late) is anything with FFO after 'Autumn Shadows' (Rasmussen, 1985) and VL (Very Late) is anything with FFO after 'Sandra

Elizabeth' (Stevens-D., 1983). (Sandra doubles as another standard for me: a standard of excellent foliage.) Early and late vary by a few days from year to year depending on weather.

Alert garden judges can notice and judge earlies and lates by their scapes. For example, H. 'Spring Frolic' (Apps, 1995) is completely bloomed out at midseason, but shows extraordinary branching and bud-count. 'Bermuda Coral' (Marvin, 1986) and 'Lime Frost' (Stamile, 1990) will not yet have opened flowers at midseason, but their outstanding lateness and superb scapes are easily noticed. Tall lates have a special place in the garden because they hold their flowers above weeds and declining foliage and provide a good contrast with the daisy-like composites that dominate late in the season.

Breeding for earlies and lates can be very difficult. Crossing earlies or lates to normal season plants has a plant breeding problem known as regression to the mean: most of the offspring will tend to bloom at normal seasons rather than the extreme seasons. Late varieties may not ripen seed before

frosts. Blooms may not open well with cool nights.

Despite these difficulties, northern and southern breeders are pushing modern color and form to earlies and lates, in diploids and tetraploids. Some northern breeders with early or late programs include Darrel Apps, Curt Hanson, John Rice, Don Marvin, Bob Sobek, Henry Lefkovits, Martin Kamensky, Gus Guzinski, and Isabel Hibbard. The other major source of earlies and lates is lucky accident in the course of normal breeding. Good hybridizers recognize this distinction, and introduce these worthy seedlings. ◀

Editor's note: Mike Huben is a high school math and science teacher, and formerly a computer programmer. He has a B.S. in Biology from Cornell University, where he studied plant breeding and entomology. Mike is a Region IV garden judge instructor and has made nine introductions during his 12 years of hybridizing. His first introduction, H. 'Early And Often' (Huben, 2001) won an Honorable Mention in 2007. His web site, Diploids Resurgent, is at: <http://hubendaylilies.blogspot.com/>

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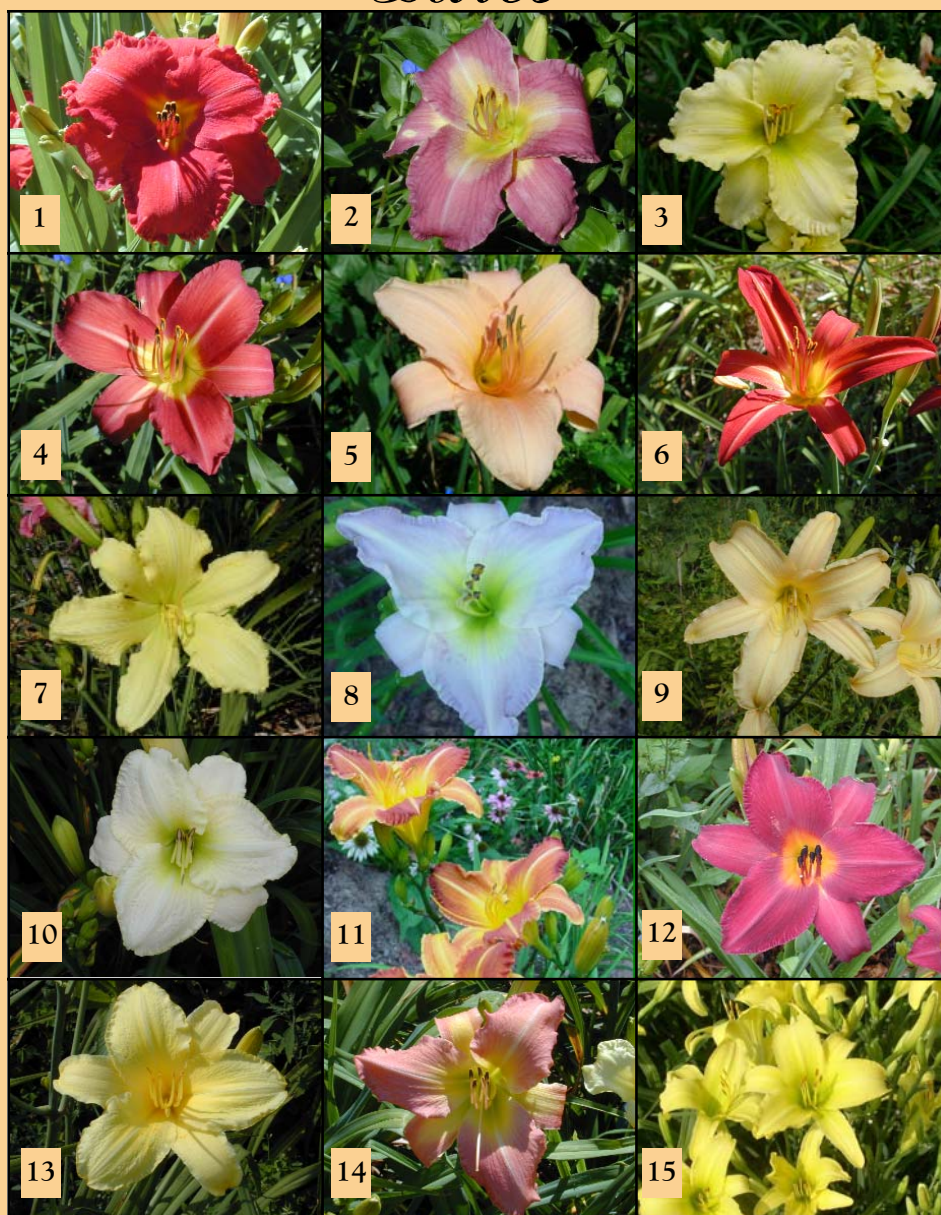
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Lates ▶Pictured:

- 1: *Hemerocallis* 'Apache War Dance' (Thomas-D., 1994)
- 2: *H.* 'Autumn Herald' (Mercer-R., 1996)
- 3: 'Autumn Oddity' (Harwood, 1998), Photo by Ellen Laprise
- 4: 'Back To School' (Sobek, 2003)
- 5: 'Bermuda Coral' (Marvin, 1986)
- 6: 'Carol Sing' (Saxton, 1981)
- 7: 'Flourish Of Trumpets' (Sobek, 1998)
- 8: 'Hazy August Sky' (Marvin, 2004), Photo by Ellen Laprise
- 9: 'Late Summer Fling' (Krupien, 1998)
- 10: 'Lime Frost' (Stamile, 1990)
- 11: 'Lord Of Autumn' (Marvin, 2005), Photo by Ellen Laprise
- 12: 'Pinhill Claret Symphony' (Lefkovits, 2004)
- 13: 'Sandra Elizabeth' (Stevens-D., 1983)
- 14: 'September Blaze' (Lachman, 1992)
- 15: 'The Jury's Out' (Apps, 2000), Photo courtesy of Darrel Apps

Not pictured:

- Hemerocallis* 'After Awhile Crocodile' (Reed, 1997)
- H.* 'August Cherry' (Marvin, 2005)
- 'August Flame' (Woods, 1967)
- 'Autumn King' (Stout, 1950)
- 'Autumn Prince' (Stout, 1941)
- 'Autumn Shadows' (Rasmussen, 1985)
- 'Bridgeton Inner Circle' (Apps, 2004)
- 'Coral Majority' (Norris-R., 2004)
- 'Decatur Special' (Davidson-Scott, 1986)
- 'Exit Light' (Reed, 1997)
- fulva sempervirens*
- 'Genuine Country' (Apps, 2005)
- 'Greywoods Bill Chambers' (Wilkinson, 2006), Photo by Darlyn Wilkinson
- multiflora*
- 'Oh Joy Oh Rapture' (Apps, 2005)
- 'Olallie Keith' (Darrow, 1981)
- 'Suzy Cream Cheese' (Bachman, 2001), see picture on page 55
- 'Tahitian Sunrise' (Bearce, 1990)
- 'Wide Wide World' (Peck, 1971)

Lates

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NEWBURY DAYLILIES ETC.

H. 'Applique' (Stamile, 2002)

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lilium**

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