

Simple instructions for growing daylilies

Daylilies, what some call the perfect perennial, are easy for anyone to grow. They are very winter hardy and thrive in full sun or partial shade. The potted plants can be planted at almost any time of the year. They can survive and do well without feeding and, after established, they can go for long periods without water. In this minimum maintenance situation, they will bloom well at the peak time. Some new varieties are ever-blooming or reblooming. If the foliage turns off color because it is too dry, watering the plants will improve their appearance. Daylilies are prolific bloomers and multiply quite rapidly, but stay in tight clumps, making them easy to maintain.

Jim Stauffer of Stauffer's of Kissel Hill in Lancaster has been growing daylilies in test gardens to examine varieties for hardiness, bloom size, texture, rebloom, and bloom persistence. The varieties he recommends are as a direct result of his tests.

The Pennsylvania Landscape and Nursery Association member says, "Although daylilies will grow in poor soil, to grow the best blooms, and to make your plants multiply faster, you should follow these recommended steps: remove sod from planting area, rototill, spade or turn over soil with a shovel; if the soil is poor, add Canadian peat moss, good top soil, compost or fill in old decomposed mulch from existing beds."

He adds that planting depth is very important. Set your potted plants with the top of mulch one- and-a-half inches above the soil level of the bed. Then apply one and a half to two inches of mulch. This will help control the weeds and hold moisture. Stauffer recommends a good grade of aged hardwood mulch. Plant clumps approximately 24 inches apart.

Daylilies will bloom for three to five weeks, depending on the variety, and re-blooming varieties will last much longer. Most will bloom between early July through the middle of September.

Everblooming daylilies begin to bloom in mid-June and continue to bloom until frost hits. Reblooming daylilies bloom more than one time a year. The blooms can be enjoyed indoors by snapping off blooms in the early morning and placing them in a plastic vat.

Each bloom lasts one day, and every day you will see new blooms open. Old blooms may be removed. While this is not necessary, it does make the garden look more attractive. The small flowering varieties, such as Stella de Oro, are more self-cleaning and may not require grooming.

After the first bloom period is complete, the foliage may be cut back to 10-12 inches above ground level, provided you plan to supply adequate moisture. This procedure makes the plants respond every four to five years by using a spade or shovel to lift 2/3 of the cut back some of your plants at any one time so your garden continues to look good. Do not cut your plants back if you cannot water during dry spells. When frost turns the foliage brown, you may cut it to four inches above ground level, or leave the foliage to serve as mulch, but remove it in the spring when the new growth starts.

Daylily clumps can be thinned every four to five years by using a spade or shovel to lift 2/3 of the clump, leaving 1/3 in place. You may then divide the lifted section in half, giving you two additional clumps. This thinning may be done at any time, but Stauffer recommends either April or late August. If you allow your clumps to get too overgrown they will rebloom much less.

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Spring into electrical safety, say professional home inspectors

It is impossible today to imagine a home not properly serviced with electrical power. From toasters to computers, lamps to hair dryers, just about everything we've come to depend on requires the safe and adequate delivery of electricity to various points throughout our home.

Yet a few of us genuinely appreciate that electricity is a powerful, and sometimes dangerous, force of nature. Professional home inspectors do. As they inspect our homes, so that we can find out what condition they are in before we buy them, they come across an alarming number of unsafe conditions.

According to the American Society of Home Inspectors (ASHI), the oldest and leading professional association for independent home inspectors in the US and Canada, improper electrical wiring is second only to water penetration as the top problem found in homes. This includes insufficient electri-

cal service to the house, incorrectly sized fuses and circuit breakers, and amateur, often dangerous, wiring connections. In fact, some members of ASHI estimate that as much as 70% to 80% of the electrical wiring they see done incorrectly is attributable to amateur, do-it-yourself repairs.

Snocking Discoveries

The most common problems develop when people try to outsmart the system by overusing. "Particularly in older homes," says ASHI member Tom O'Connor of Pittsburgh, "where the circuitry is not designed to handle today's load of appliances, I've seen copper wires — even copper pennies — in the fuse outlets, instead of fuses in order to allow more current. People also typically place 30 amp fuses in 15 amp outlets in an effort to draw more power. These techniques defeat the entire purpose of the fuse as a current overload protection device, and expose the residents to a

serious fire hazard."

A similar danger, say the home inspectors, is the practice of double tapping full circuits. People often think they can save on expensive rewiring jobs by tapping additional new devices into an existing circuit. This also overloads the circuit and can cause fires.

Open air splices is another frequent mistake. ASHI member Ken Salvo of Basking Ridge, New Jersey once found several spliced connections within one box in an unfinished basement laundry area. There was no cover, which is required by code, and the wires were simply twisted together without caps or tape as they dangled out of the box over the washing machine! The circuit was hot and live. When he pointed out this danger to the seller during his inspection, she was surprised because she had assumed her husband knew how to do every-

thing correctly!

Safety First

As home owners become energized by the approach of Spring to undertake repairs and maintenance around the home, ASHI strongly urges them to follow some basic and important safety rules concerning the electrical system:

1. Never work with or near electricity when hands or feet are damp.
2. Never remove service panel covers.
3. Don't use outlet multipler plugs to connect lamps and appliances whose ampere totals more than the capacity of the circuit, typically 15 amps.
4. Avoid using extension cords whenever possible. Never run them across hallways, doorways, under carpeting or furniture, or through walls. Never staple them in place.
5. Never replace blown fuses with larger amp fuses.

6. Don't cut the grounding (3rd) prong of a plug to make it fit into a two-hole receptacle.

7. Keep electrical appliances such as hair dryers, radios, and shavers, away from bath tubs, sinks, and showers.
8. Don't pull cords out of receptacles by the wire. Hold the plug and pull.
9. Replace worn or frayed lamp and appliance wires.
10. Don't try to extinguish small electrical fires with water. Use baking soda or a Type "C" household halon extinguisher which is rated for electrical fires.
11. Always disconnect a circuit before making repairs on it or installing a light fixture.
12. Never leave wire splices exposed or in open junction boxes.
13. All electrical work done in a house should be inspected and approved by the local authorities.
14. When in doubt, call a licensed electrician.

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IS YOUR HOUSE TRYING TO TELL YOU SOMETHING?



"We recommend that you have your home inspected by a professional home inspector to identify potential electrical safety hazards before they become a problem."

"You'll look and smell it. It's a warning sign that you need to have your home inspected by a professional home inspector to identify potential electrical safety hazards before they become a problem."

"This inspector advises to identify potential electrical safety hazards before they become a problem."



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