



The
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Daylilies and companion plants

Daylily Ambassadors

Regional Service Awards



The Accidental Hybridizer

Rich Howard of CTDaylily Gardens

by Rich Howard
Region 4, Connecticut

photos by Rich Howard

The beginnings- “I didn’t know plants could do that!”

I bought a home in winter 1993, two acres in semi-rural Wallingford, a town in central Connecticut. I had had houseplants but knew very little about gardening. Things were about to change dramatically. In 1994, I purchased a few plants at the local nursery to brighten up the yard. One was a potted daylily, ‘Stella de Oro’ (Jablonski, 1975). I liked its cheery, yellow color. After it finished blooming it sat neglected on my deck and languished there all winter. The following spring, I was surprised when new growth appeared and was amazed later when it bloomed! My neighbor Scott, a Master Gardener, was visiting at the time and he enlightened me on the wonders of perennials.

Plants coming back from the dead? I needed to learn more. When someone told me a local daylily club was having a plant sale, I attended, bought some plants, and met some nice people. I started going to their meetings—and a few years later I was president of

the club! I was all-in!

Hybridizing

I joined the AHS in 1999 and started receiving daylily catalogs in the mail. I read about how to hybridize in a “Daylily Discounters” catalog and decided to try it. I was thrilled when I had a cute little red seedling bloom two years later. Things accelerated from there. I started buying daylilies online via auction sites, and was soon selling daylilies, hiring help, and building a web site. In 2002, after 33 years as an engineer for the State of Connecticut, I retired and was able to devote more time to daylilies. I became a Master Gardener in 2008, and since then have spoken at many conventions and to daylily clubs all over the US and Canada.

I introduced my first daylilies in 2012. One was a lavender and cream bicolor spider with patterned eye—I can remember the first day I saw it bloom! I named it ‘Pawprints on My Heart’ (PPOMH),



‘Pawprints on My Heart’
(2012)



‘I Am Woman’
(2020)



‘Wallingford Woolly Bully’ (2011)



'Froggy' (2015)



'Green is Good' (2015)



'My Ruffy' (2017)

reflecting my love of animals—especially dogs. From a cross of 'Waiting in the Wings' (Stamile, 2000) x 'Golly Wally' (Adams-P., 2002), PPOMH is an early bloomer like its parents. It has very good branching and is a nice combination of colors for an early blooming daylily that isn't yellow or red. It won an Honorable Mention Award in 2018.

Early on I worked with both tetraploids and diploids. I work now mostly with tetraploids, but I do have a few diploid introductions, including 'Froggy' (2015) and 'Green is Good' (2015). These came from line breeding two of George Doorakian's daylilies with lots of green in them, 'Emerald Starburst' (2004) and 'Rose F. Kennedy' (2007).

Darrel Apps

During trips to visit family in New Jersey, I would also visit Woodside Nursery, then owned by Darrel Apps. We became friendly—perhaps because of all the money I spent there! Darrel showed me his seedling fields and his greenhouse operation. I remember him exclaiming, "look at that branching!" as we walked among his seedlings. He sold plants in pots and taught me that the performance of potted daylilies—especially bud count and branching—is never as good as when they are planted in the ground.

Darrel hybridized in greenhouses, and I vowed I would con-

struct one on my property. I did so right after I retired. It's a 1400-square-foot heated hoop house, with potted daylilies on benches. I make a lot of seeds there each year. Over the past 15 years I have sold thousands of daylily seeds online via the "Lily Auction". It is nice to hybridize in the greenhouse—no bending over—and selling seeds helps pay the bills! I test the soil in the pots often to ensure the plants will get the nutrients they need. The daylilies in the greenhouse are at peak bloom in April and May before the heat of summer; they readily set seed for me.

Teeth and Patterns

I have had success in producing some "toothy" and patterned introductions. Toothy cultivars include 'Wallingford Woolly Bully' (2011), 'The Year of the Shark' (2015) and 'Everything's Connected' (2019). I have produced some cristated toothy midribs from the 'Wallingford Woolly Bully' lines. I have been working with these as well as Jamie Gossard's 'Heavenly New Frontiers', an unusual form crispate with a toothy edge.

My favorite toothy introduction is 'Fran Harding' (2016), named after the hybridizer of 'Forestlake Ragamuffin' (Harding-F., 1993). 'Fran Harding', the daylily, has a lot going on with teeth, ruffles and some sculpting.

Some of my patterned intros are 'Polar Vortex' (2014), a very

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'Everything is Connected' (2019)



'The Year of the Shark' (2015)



'Fran Harding' (2016)



'Polar Vortex' (2014)



'Space Cowboy' (2017)



'Executive Time' (2019)

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pale lavender with patterned eye of purple, fuchsia, and magenta bands; 'Space Cowboy' (2017), a dusty rose with violet red patterned eye; and 'Executive Time' (2019), a near white with purple edge and appliquéd eye edged in purple. Complex eyed patterns may be affected by temperature and often vary from bloom to bloom, even on the same plant. However, with each new generation of seedlings, I am seeing patterns that are more consistent. For me, it's been a matter of breeding patterns that express themselves best with other patterns that do the same.

Yipes Stripes!

I worked a bit with Mike Derrow's 'Pink Stripes' (2006) when he released it, crossing it with 'Indian Giver' (Ferguson, 1991), a former Stout medal contender. From that diploid cross I got a seedling with lavender broken color and white striping which I named 'Yankee Pinstripes' (2013). It won an Honorable Mention Award in 2018. I was fortunate to have 'Yankee Pinstripes' converted to tetraploid by Bill Waldrop, and I have been playing with the conversion quite a bit. Bill also converted Derrow's 'Pink Stripes', and I have gotten some interesting striped kids from it. I have found it

very difficult to produce distinct striping in tetraploids.

In summer 2010, I saw a unique bloom with broken color in my seedling patch. I had seen this trait before, but it usually appeared in only one bloom. The next day I was thrilled to see it did it again! It was from a cross of Moldovan's 'Flying Trapeze' (2005) and my co-introduction with Rob Cobb, 'Webster's Aggie' (2012). No two blooms of this unusual form, broken color seedling were ever the same, and I told a friend it looked like several cans of paint had exploded near it. It later became known as 'Explosion in The Paint Factory' (2013), a name that suits it perfectly. EITPF will occasionally throw an entirely yellow bloom—even an entire scape with all yellow blooms, although this is rare. Interestingly, I gave a former worker a plant with an all yellow scape and a subsequent new fan bloomed with broken color. This year I saw a pot of two all yellow fans increase to five fans and the new fans exhibited broken color. EITPF won the Eugene S. Foster award for best late blooming daylily in 2018, as well as an HM, and the R.W. Munson Jr. award for best patterned daylily in 2019.



'Yankee Pinstripes' (2013)



'Explosion in the Paint Factory' (2013)



Tetraploid 'Pink Stripes' seedling



A seedling out of 'Explosion in the Paint Factory'



Above and below, Rich Howard seedlings out of 'Undefinable' (DeVito, 2014)

Today

I am currently working with Nicole DeVito's 'Undefinable' (2014), a tetraploid with consistent broken color, and my EITPF, and am into the second generation and beyond for both. I'd like to see broken colors in all daylily forms. Some of my seedlings from 'Undefinable' are stunning, and I have had some success in extending the form range; one that bloomed this year has shown sculpting. This is exciting stuff!

Before you start a hybridizing program

In my early hybridizing I had more swings and misses than hits. Don't be discouraged if you are disappointed with your early results. Here are some suggestions to consider when beginning a hybridizing program.

- When you catch the hybridizing bug, think carefully about how many plants you use and how many seedlings you produce. They all require space, resources (water, fertilizer, etc.)—and most importantly, time. Having to grow, monitor, and care

for too many could make your passion for creating new day-lilies a drudgery.

- There are a few people I have encountered on my journey whom I trust for advice. Seek out those who you feel treat people fairly and who are honest about their plants.
- Join a local club —and the AHS, if you are not already a member. Attend as many presentations as you can to hear hybridizers speak. Learn from their positive and negative experiences.
- Have an overall goal. How serious do you want to be? Do you want to create a yard filled with your own daylilies and never register any? Or maybe register a few and name them after loved ones? Or start a business to support yourself and family? A business may help support your hobby, but it's really hard to make a living from daylilies.
- Visit gardens in your area. Make note of the cultivars that grow well in your region and align with your hybridizing goals .

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Seedlings



('The Year of the Shark' [Howard, 2015] x 'All Things to All Men' [Emmerich, 2012])



('Jellyroll Morton' [Hanson-C., 2007] x 'Stolen Heart' [Pickles, 2016])



('Greetings Earthling' [Faulkner, 2011] x 'Shaggy Pumpkin' [Reimer, 2014])



('Solomon's Sunrise' [Ansari, 2015] x 'Zyzzified' [DeCaire, 2015])

Five thoughts on hybridizing

1. It's easier to make progress if you focus. It's OK to be interested in several areas, but recognize this will require more space and may affect how fast you progress in each.
2. Sooner or later you will want/need to sell plants. Have a plan on how: a web site? an auction site? Facebook?
3. Branching and bud count are harder to attain than a pretty face. It helps to start with parents that have good plant habit. I will register a lower bud count if the plant has a very special look, but this is a slippery slope. We tend to think our own daylilies are special, but it's important to be objective and introduce plants which are an improvement, helping to move the daylily forward.
4. There are no perfect daylilies. If you sell your creations, be honest about the traits, including the flaws.
5. There are many different ways to start seeds. Sue Bergeron, AHS Scientific Studies Chair, wrote an article in the fall 2010 issue

of *The Daylily Journal* called "Breaking Daylily Seed Dormancy with Stratification." It should be required reading. Some online sellers of daylily seeds state "These seeds have been refrigerated 3 weeks and are ready to go." Refrigeration alone does not encourage germination. Seeds may have some residual moisture, which may mean a simple chilling does work but seeds should be in *moist* media when chilled, to simulate winter. Not all daylily seeds have dormancy, so some seeds may not benefit from the technique. Read the article!

To date I have registered 104 daylilies. I'll hybridize as long as I physically can, and as long as I am having fun. My first thought when I see a new seedling's first bloom is "Now, in what direction can I take this?" I suspect most hybridizers feel this way. Having this wonderful passion for hybridizing daylilies in my later years is one of the best things that has ever happened to me.

I never planned on being a daylily hybridizer, but by happy accident, I am here. It's a good place to be. ~

Futures



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For more information, and to see more of Rich Howard's introductions, visit <http://www.ctdaylily.com/>



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