



Daylilies

There are three types of Daylilies and they can have different zone requirement. The three types are as follows:

Dormant - These daylilies completely die back to the ground in fall and emerge in spring. They are the most cold tolerant of the three types and survive winters as cold as zone 3 without additional protection.

Evergreen - These daylilies do not die back to the ground in fall, they remain green throughout the winter. Because they do not go dormant in the ground during the cold season they are more susceptible to frosts, freezes, and cold temperatures. These require additional protection in colder zones (zone 5 or 4 and northward); an insulating layer of fluffy mulch (leaves, straw, etc.) around and over the plant would do the trick.

Semi-evergreen - These, logically, are somewhat evergreen, but will lose some of their leaves during fall. Their cold tolerance lies somewhere in between two. Gardeners in the very coldest zones will need extra protection in winter.

The most common problem that gardeners have when gardening with semi and evergreen daylilies is when they plant them in above ground flower pots and leave them outdoors throughout the winter. The root systems of the plants (any plant really) needs the insulating warmth of the ground it is planted in to live up to it rated hardiness zones.

Day lilies are genetically programmed for several periods of bloom, but they do need a rest period between them. In addition, it is imperative that you remove the spent blossoms to prevent seed set. If the plant is sending energy to making seeds, it can't be bothered making more flowers. For best repeat bloom, either dead-head regularly, or else remove the entire scape when the last flower has finished. Some day lilies are very rapid growers. They benefit from frequent division, maybe as often as every third year. Otherwise the fans become too tightly packed and compete for nutrients and water, preventing re-bloom. If you have not been diligent removing the spent flowers or seed pods, some of these pods will ripen and spill their seed into your garden. You'll wind up with a whole lot of second generation day lilies that may or may not perform like their illustrious parents. Remember that children may closely resemble their parents, but never are exactly the same.

Daylilies are tremendously adaptive. That said, they'll get a much better start if you give them a little extra T.L.C. in the beginning. Open your box of plants as soon as you get them and put their roots in a bucket of water (NOT the tops, though!) to help them re hydrate a bit before planting. They can stay there while you prepare the soil, locate your tools, or catch a bite of lunch. If necessary, they can live in water in a shady place for several days, but that's not the best option.

Add some compost to the planting hole and work it into the soil. Next cut back the foliage on the plant by about half. You can leave any scapes in place so that you can enjoy the remaining flowers this year. The reason to cut back the foliage is to reduce the plant's need for water during hot weather. This allows the roots to become re-established. It's not necessary to fertilize at planting time, I usually only fertilize in the spring. When you plant your daylily, make a cone of dirt in the bottom of the hole. Spread the roots out over the cone, and back fill with that compost/soil mix. Make sure that the crown (where the roots join the top) is just at the soil surface. Daylilies don't bloom well if planted too deep. Tamp it down well and of course water it in. Keep it well watered for the first

couple weeks until you see new growth starting. And that's it! Oops, except for one more thing. Label. If your new purchase is a registered variety, you should keep track of its name. One of these days you may want to share it with a friend, and knowing it's moniker would be a big plus. In the meantime, using a Sharpie pen (the indelible sort), write the name on a white plastic picnic knife and bury it near your plant. With any luck, it will remain legible until you get around to doing proper labels. It's also a good idea to keep a list of your purchases indoors in your garden notebook.

Soil is the basis for good plant growth. And while daylilies will grow well in almost any soil, the best performance will occur in soil that is high in organic matter, drains well and has a neutral pH (around 6.5) If you are serious about optimizing your daylilies' performance, my first recommendation is to have a soil test done. You can simply purchase a test for pH at your local garden center, or you can send a soil sample off to your cooperative extension (look in the phone book or online at Yahoo!) and have the whole gamut of nutrients and the percentage of humus assessed. If your soil proves to be acidic (pH below 6.0), something quite common on the east coast and in the northwest, fall is the best time to add lime. Lime takes some time to work into the soil, so it's best applied in the fall and scratched in. By the time your plants are ready to start new growth in the spring, your pH should be up to an ideal 6.5. On the other hand, if you find that your soil is basic (has a pH higher than 7.5), something common in the middle and western sections of the country where limestone is the rule, you may need to add sulphur to reduce the pH. Use your test results to determine how much of each you need.

All daylilies would have to be classified as near-white. That is not to say that they won't appear white to your eye in your garden, but they are not going to approach the sparkling white of impatiens, geraniums, or petunias. But there are certainly some pretty close-to-white daylilies around. In full sun by afternoon they will appear very white indeed. The underlying color of white daylilies is either very pale yellow, pale pink, or pale lavender, and in certain circumstances (shade, overcast day, or the weaker sun of a northern climate) these tints will appear. Notable white daylilies include 'Gentle Shepard' (SEv, very white, but somewhat weak as a garden plant), 'Lime Frost' (Dor, late, vigorous, and quite white), 'Joan Senior' (Ev, quite white and very hardy even in the north), and 'White Tie Affair' (Dor, low growing and white in full sun). My only recommendation is that you not try to mix them with true white perennials as they always come out on the short end.



If you look through the AHS checklists, you'll find a whole slew of references to "blue." In the Red Book alone (1989-1993) I found 8 daylilies that began with the word "Blue" and used either "near-blue", "lavender-blue" or "blue-purple" in their descriptions. That's not counting all those that ended with "blue" or had it somewhere in the middle. Beauty is certainly in the eye of the beholder, but I have yet to see a daylily that I would remotely classify as blue. Delphiniums are blue. Lobelias are blue. Iris are blue. Daylilies are not blue. The reason is simple. The compound that results in the blue color in other flowers is totally lacking in daylilies. There are geneticists who have considered the possibility of gene-splicing in some anthocyanin to produce a genuine blue daylily, but so far that hasn't happened. Truthfully, I'm not sure I'd like it if it did.

Diploid and tetraploid are words used to describe the numbers of chromosomes present in your daylily. Diploids have two sets of chromosomes, and tetraploids have four. Initially, way back when, all daylilies came from diploid parentage. By use of the mutagen, colchicine, hybridizers altered the ploidy of the daylily from diploid to tetraploid. Once converted to tetraploid form, the plant can be used to breed with other tetraploids. Any seed resulting from a tet x tet cross will be tetraploid. Likewise, and seed from a dip x dip cross will be diploid. No seed will result from a dip x tet cross.

Does it matter which is which? Only if you are hybridizing. Both plants can have outstanding scapes, large bud count, vigor, and good substance in their flowers. Tets in general are a bit thicker in the scape, leaves and petals, and perhaps a little coarser in appearance. On the other hand, they are more likely to be able to withstand heavy winds and hard rain. By converting a diploid to tetraploid form, the hybridizer has access to more of the genetic possibilities in each daylily.