

Dazzling Daylilies – June 4, 2014



Our June monthly meeting features a presentation on "Dazzling Daylilies" by Kelly Noel. Although always interested in gardening, Kelly became a more serious gardener in 1994 – just before she retired after having taught high school mathematics for 35 years. Kelly joined Master Gardeners in 2003 as a way to do some volunteering, to meet other gardeners and to spread the good news about gardening! Her love of daylilies dates back to childhood but she began to hybridize daylilies more recently. She planted her first daylily seeds in 2009 – as backyard hobby. Now Kelly is on the executive of the Ontario Daylily Society. In her garden she has hundreds of registered daylily cultivars as well as hundreds of her own unregistered crosses.

Kelly believes that the daylily is the perfect perennial. She began by noting the difference between daylilies and other lilies; the daylily (plants of the genus *Hemerocallis*) does not have a bulb and unlike other lilies is not susceptible to the ravages of the Japanese lily beetle. There are daylilies of many shapes and sizes and it is possible to have daylilies in bloom throughout the growing season from mid-June through to mid-September. What is really good about them is that they need very little care; in a normal summer they need little watering and no fertilizing particularly if an organic mulch or other general soil amendments are used in your garden. It is good to keep the plants looking tidy by deadheading on a regular, even daily basis; though spent blooms will drop off and even deadheading is not essential.

(continued)

There are a myriad ways of describing daylilies and Kelly described each type with the use of an illustration: for example “self” means all one colour; “bi-colour” is two different colours while a “bi-tone” is two shades of the same colour; the “eye” is the dark patch in the centre of the lily; a “band” is a mark on the petals only; a “halo” is a faint suggestion of an “eye”; a “polychrome is a wash of colours. There were numerous other terms used which illustrated the incredible variety of flowers that have been developed.

There are in fact six recognised forms of daylily: “single” which has three petals and three sepals (illustration - taken from website indicated below); “doubles” which resemble a peony; “polymerous” designates a daylily with more than the normal three sepals (usually four or five) in the outer whorl and more than three petals (usually the same number as sepals) in the inner whorl; “spider” describes a flower whose petals have a length-to-width ratio of at least 4 to 1; “unusual forms” is a class of daylilies based exclusively on the shapes of the petals or sepals; and “sculpted” where three-dimensional structural features emanate from the part of the petal surfaces which result in pleated, cristate or relief forms (for more details on the forms see:

http://www.daylilies.org/ahs_dictionary/flower_forms.html)

Kelly also spent time describing the methods of cross-pollinating daylilies which she does in her own garden. Her descriptions were illustrated with examples of daylilies that she had cross-pollinated herself and the results were very interesting. Kelly’s visual presentation was excellent and her talk was extremely well received by the members present. There may well be a few daylily cross-pollination experiments in the Greely area over the next few years and almost certainly more daylilies in our gardens!

