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## The Green Scene

*Save a tree! Send your email address to [kackley@iastate.edu](mailto:kackley@iastate.edu) to receive this publication via e-mail.*



### *Farm Focus—Wilson Farms*

September is a great time to plant daylilies, when the soil temperature is moderate. Bob Wilson, of Wilson farms, has planted plenty. Planting supports his passion of hybridizing daylilies. Beginning in the early 1990's and continuing today, he constantly looks for foliage plants that are not green. He searches for burgundies, yellows and chartreuses. At first he looked for all perennials meeting his criteria. As time passed, he became increasingly interested in tall and spidery daylilies. One day his brother, Randy, asked, "Have you ever thought about hybridizing?" Bob did think about it and decided to try it. That year, after the daylilies set pods, he harvested the seeds, and planted them in small pots in his apartment. He knew nothing about hybridizing and didn't label anything back then (now he's very careful to do so.) With no mentor, his directions were all over the charts. Since it takes at least two years in Iowa to get bloom from seed, nothing really exciting happened at first. Those first hybrids were interesting but ugly.

Little by little he learned from his mistakes and began to focus on spiders with unusual forms. He invested heavily in older spiders and forms because he felt they held key genetics for his program. He continues to do that. He believes that crossing the old with the new will result in "breaks" that will be useful.

The genus *Hemerocallis* is native to Asia. Since the early 1930s, hybridizers in the United States and England have made great improvements in daylilies. Originally, the only colors were yellow, orange, and fulvous red. Today there are colors ranging from near-whites, pastels, yellows, oranges, pinks, vivid reds, crimson, and purple, nearly true-blue and fabulous blends. Many people are familiar with only the common yellow or orange daylilies which are often seen along roadsides. Most of these "ditch lilies" were brought to America by the immigrants from Europe as a memory of their homeland. All the modern daylilies have been developed through a complicated history of hybridization among these and other wild types.

As we walked, Wilson commented that, "it is remarkable what hybridizers have done, absolutely remarkable! We are always looking for a break, something more striking, like a hybridizer friend of mine from Marshalltown. He had a daylily that had pink streaks in the petals. You don't normally have streaks in the petals, so his Pink Ice is very valuable to other hybridizers working with breaks. As hybridizers, our goal is to perfect a bloom that is first class but also has that "look" to it."

"This bed was planted in 2004, had hundreds of seedlings, and is now down to this after all the culling," he said as he pointed to a large bed with few plants remaining. "The green flags are by the plants that will be introduced in 2009."

Wilson first introduced new unusual daylily forms to commerce in 2007. He introduced six more in 2008 and has a goal of introducing three to six more each year. He feels he's getting somewhere – after nearly 15 years of effort, he's getting good northern daylilies. He noted there is a big difference between southern and northern varieties. "There are some beautiful southern hybridized daylilies, but many can't survive and flourish in Iowa."

Wilson sells from his and his brother's farm by appointment. To contact him, call 641.891.6751 or e-mail him at [bwilson@knoxvillraceway.com](mailto:bwilson@knoxvillraceway.com).



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Sincerely, **Dale R. Miller**, County Extension Education Director

# Marlys Anderson Wins!



Marlys Anderson is this month's (and the very 1<sup>st</sup>) *Green Scene* Photo Contest winner! Marlys has more than 40 gardens scattered around her home near Lake Red Rock. For a virtual tour, go to [www.marlysgardens.com](http://www.marlysgardens.com) (a very fun site, indeed)!

Her photo entry, taken last fall is titled *Red* and features a Burning Bush from her Bed #3. Marlys tirelessly gives to her community. As she says, "I like being involved in volunteer service projects such as Marion County Master Gardeners. I love belonging to Knoxville Federated Garden Club (she's President) and serving as co-chair on the Bessie Spaur Butterfly Garden committee. I also enjoy belonging to the American Hosta Society and the Russ O'Hara Hosta Society; serving on volunteer committees in both organi-

zations. I'm a supporting member of the Iowa Arboretum & the Des Moines Botanical Center. I cherish my friends, my family, and my work as a nurse."

Marlys wins a 2010 Garden Calendar—Congratulations! To win *your* copy of this fabulous calendar, e-mail your favorite Halloween garden shot to [kackley@iastate.edu](mailto:kackley@iastate.edu) by midnight, September 25th. A panel of impartial judges will vote and the winner's photograph will appear in October's *Green Scene*!

## September Checklist

- ✓ Plant tiger, Oriental, and Asiatic lilies this month. The first two weeks of September are also a good time to plant perennials or to divide and transplant perennials you already have.
- ✓ Bring houseplants indoors before the nights get too cool.
- ✓ Now is a good time to take cuttings. Many plants produce roots from the cut end of a stem when it is planted in the soil. Herbaceous perennials such as cone-flowers, hardy geraniums and phlox make good candidates.
- ✓ Prepare for Christmas color! Place poinsettias and Christmas cactus indoors where they will receive 10 hours of bright light (and 14 hours of total darkness) each day. A Christmas cactus will need a cool spot (50-60 degrees), while poinsettias are OK at 65-72 degrees.
- ✓ Plant some spring-flowering bulbs in pots to enjoy over the winter. If you intend to force early blooming for the holidays, put your bulbs in the refrigerator now.
- ✓ Stake young trees when they are planted this fall so that they will not be loosened by the wind during winter.

- ✓ Reseed lawns early in the month. Keep the soil moist until the seeds sprout. Sod lawns anytime this month through October.
- ✓ Start with core aeration and dethatching, leaving about 1/2" of thatch to decompose.
- ✓ Fertilize with one pound Nitrogen per 1000 square feet to encourage top growth and winter hardiness.
- ✓ 1# Nitrogen equals 5 lbs of a 20-0-0 per 1000 sq. ft; 4 lbs of a 25-0-0 per 1,000 sq. ft, and 3 3/4 lbs of a 27-3-4 per sq. ft.
- ✓ Control broadleaf weeds using Trimec, Momentum, and Millennium.
- ✓ For winter interest, plant a large container with ever-green shrubs, bulbs and wintering flowering plants. A generally accepted guideline for hardiness in a container is to deduct one zone (i.e., a plant hardy to Zone 5 might only be hardy to Zone 4 in a winter container garden).
- ✓ Your veggie garden can be improved by sowing rosen rye within the next month. It will be 4-5" high before winter comes and can be tilled early in the spring. It will add humus which makes the soil more drought resistant.

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