

Daylilies 'make wonderful companion plants'

By Carol J. Nelson
For The Taos News

I began to fall in love with daylilies (genus: *Hemerocallis*) when I realized there was much more to the perennial than the tall, orange, gangly plants that I usually saw growing along the roadside in many states.

In the Southwest, daylilies will thrive in our sunny environment because they do not require especially good soil or even much fertilizing, thus making the plants an easy grow in our gardens. The flowers of the lowly daylily can be single or double, saucers, trumpets or spiderlike and all colors except blue.

Daylilies make wonderful companion plants in our gardens, either in bloom or

with their tall grasslike leaves. They are suitable for either mass plantings or featured specimens. The plants come in a wide variety of heights and have a wide range of bloom seasons (early, midseason and late). Flowers range in size from 1 1/2 inches to almost 10 inches across, and they appear in a wide range of forms from round to flat and ruffled to spider and shaped like a trumpet. The throats of daylilies have a spectrum of color from orange, gold, green, to a lemon-cream hue.

The daylily has very few maladies and is one of the easiest perennials to grow and maintain. The daylily should be planted in full sun to partial shade, but should receive at least four hours of sun per day for the best bloom. Although daylilies are reason-



Courtesy Carol J. Nelson

The pink daylily is called "chorus line."

ably drought tolerant once established, mulching plants will help with the conservation of water and increase their

period of bloom. Your plants will multiply well and can be divided after three to four years. Individual blossoms of

any daylily will last just one day, but the stems carry many buds and most plants give a long-lasting bloom period. Deadheading the plants is not necessary unless you are a perfectionist like I am, so I tended to wander through my garden in the early morning hours and remove the previous day's spent flowers mostly for neatness on my plantings.

A daylily can be used in a border, back against a wall or fence and raised in pots as well. I have had very good luck potting daylilies and placing them on my westward-facing portico. This has allowed me to use the potted daylilies as color focal points and companion plantings for my potted grasses and coneflowers.

Our local nurseries carry a wide range of daylilies in a good variety of colors for the

Southwest garden, but if you would like to venture further down the garden path and invest in more colors, shapes, fragrant flowers and throat and eye colors, my favorite mail order website is oakesdaylilies.com. Happy gardening!

Note

If you are interested in learning more about gardening in the Southwest, think about becoming a member of Los Jardineros Garden Club. Contact Mary Short, membership chair, at (575) 758-1590 or via email at clydeshort@verizon.net. Join us at our next meeting March 16 at 9:30 a.m. in the Taos Tennis Room, located at 88 State Road 150 in El Prado.

Nelson is a master gardener and member of the Los Jardineros Garden Club.