

Home/Garden

Olallie North: Daylilies call it home



Daylilies make for a beautiful flower

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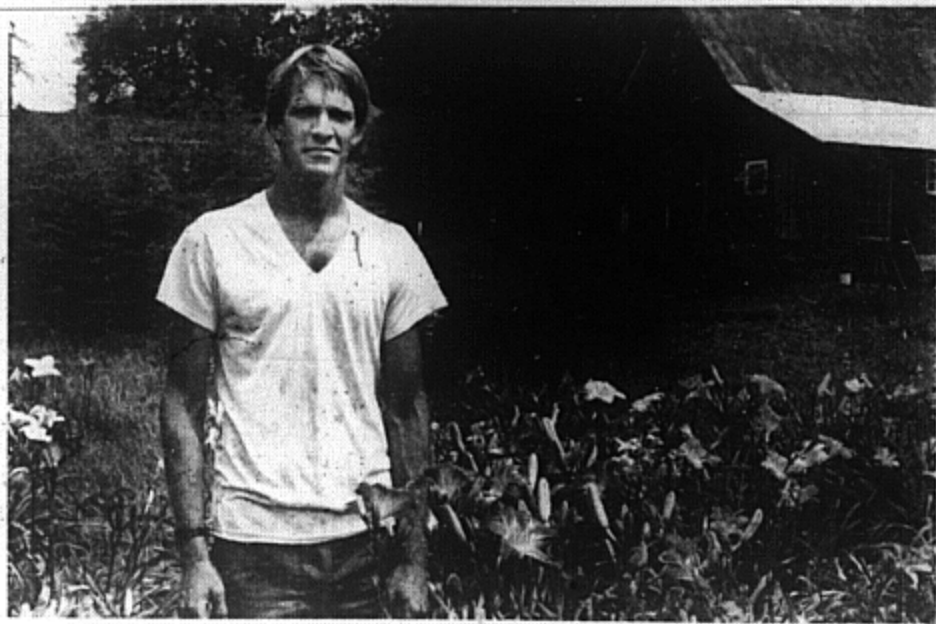
One sweltering July Saturday I turned off a shaded Vermont road in South Newfane into a blazing field of daylilies, the Olallie North nursery. I had been told that this was an odd kind of nursery where you might have to persuade the owner to sell the daylilies and I expected an eccentric old gentleman, but I found Chris Darrow, young, lean and lanky, dressed in a T-shirt and blue shorts guarding his stock.

Chris is carrying on a family tradition that began with his grandfather, George Darrow who bred plants in Maryland. George Darrow, spent his working life with small fruits, the Darrow strawberry and blackberry are named for him. He called his farm Olallie, an Indian word for a place where berries are found.

When he retired he started working with daylilies and spent the next 30 years collecting and hybridizing his beautiful and tough flower. Chris said there are at least 30 Olallie named hybrids that are still available from nurseries. He showed me Olallie Lao and Olallie Lass which were just about done blooming. They began very early in June and continue for seven weeks, till the end of July.

The blossoms are small and bright yellow. Lao is a little bigger and a little deeper in color, but Lass has more ruffling. Darrow named many of his hybrids after members of the family. There is an Olallie Christopher, but Chris doesn't have any at Olallie North. Seven years ago when George's eyesight began to fail his son and his family started to move the daylilies to Olallie North. Chris was still in college at the University of Vermont, but after his grandfather's death he took over the flowers and his records and books. Now he reigns over a field of daylilies, in every color from deep reds to a rare near-white.

"I try to avoid saying these daylilies are guaranteed to live. It's really hard to kill a daylily unless you put it in the driveway and run over it a few times. They aren't susceptible to pests or disease and they are tough. One year I transplanted some daylilies real late in October and there wasn't a lot of snow cover that year. In the spring I found the roots had all heaved and been exposed to freezing and thawing weather for quite a while. I planted them again and they reestablished and bloomed that year.



Chris Darrow is right at home in his garden.

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Pat Leuchtman



Between The Rows

Road in South Newfane

If you write, all the address you need is Olallie North, South Newfane, VT 05351. Most of the daylilies are \$5 a clump although rarer varieties like the near-whites and purples are \$10.

The nursery is still fairly new, some varieties are in very limited supply, hence its reputation for refusing to part with some of his plants. The nursery is open Wednesday through Sunday from 9 am - 5 pm. You can stop in, pick out your plant and have it dug off the spot, but spring and fall are the great times for transplanting.

"Many of the plants are not named. There are over 40,000 named daylilies registered. All of George Darrow's plants are named varieties, but when they were moved from Maryland, some of the name tags were lost. Since it would be improper to call these lost daylilies by a registered name, Chris sells them by color and description.

There isn't a lot you have to do to take care of daylilies. Some of the ones I've planted in this field have been fertilized with composted horse manure and some some haven't even gotten that much. The nursery is still a pretty new endeavor and I've been so busy, I haven't had the time to figure out a really good organic fertilization program. I want to keep it organic. I don't use chemicals at all. I just can't be sure that even the chemicals we think are all right today will still be all right 25 years from now.

Daylilies need sun to bloom. If they have full sun they should give the full amount of bloom. If they are planted in a deeper shade the amount of bloom may be somewhat less. If they are planted in deep shade, you may get a lot of foliage

and no bloom at all. You just have to try and see what happens. If you have great soil, they may bloom pretty well in the shade. Water seems to be the most important thing. They won't die, but the bloom will be seriously affected if the season is very dry. The buds shrivel up and fall off.

Chris does about 99 per cent of the work with the daylilies himself. It just getting to the point where he may have to think about having a little more than just occasional help. Gardeners who want to see the daylilies in bloom will find Olallie North on the Marlborough Branch

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