

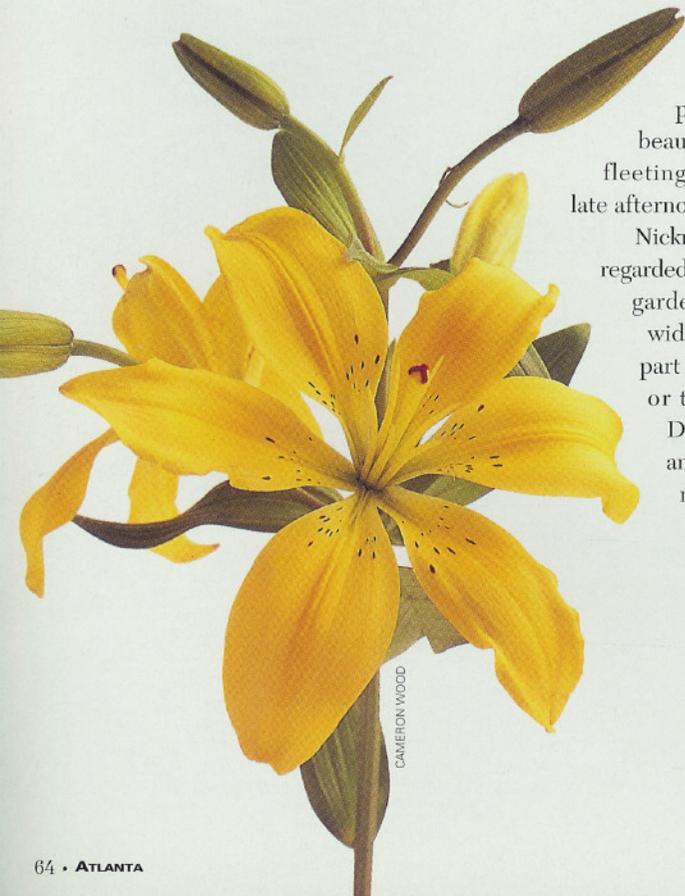
Daffodils may herald the arrival of spring in Atlanta, but the daylily is the undisputed harbinger of summer.

Where it springs up untended along roadsides or in the dappled half-shade of Georgia pines, the common orange daylily seems comfortable posing as a wildflower. Yet, the daylily's nodding grace and underlying tough constitution have earned it a place in even the most refined gardens. Few plants seem so commonplace and yet so extraordinary — with a beauty made more poignant by each blossom's fleeting splendor (morning blossoms wither by late afternoon).

Nicknamed "the perfect perennial," the daylily is regarded as one of the most versatile and reliable of garden plants. Few others can tolerate such a wide range of growing conditions: full sun or part shade, sandy or clay soils, slightly dry sites or those with less than perfect drainage.

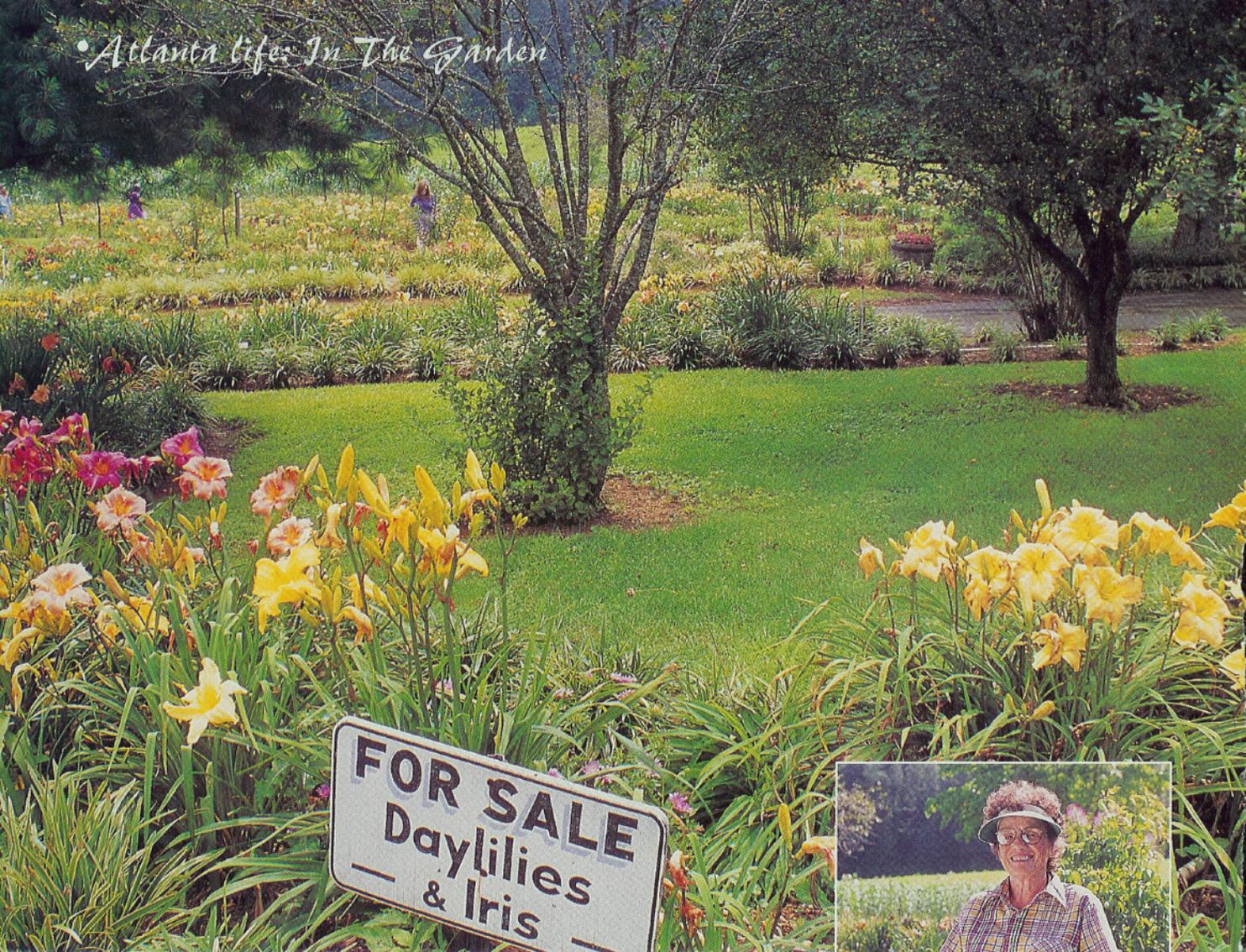
Daylilies blend as easily into carefully planned and manicured borders as they do into more natural settings. Their strong flowerscapes

The botanical name *Hemerocallis* means "beauty for a day" — as each daylily blossom emerges in the morning and fades by late afternoon.



CAMERON WOOD

**HILDA J. BRUCKER DISCOVERS
REMARKABLE VARIETY IN GEORGIA'S
DAYLILY SPECIALTY NURSERIES
PHOTOGRAPHY BY JOHN GROVER**



never need staking, and the plants are highly resistant to pests and diseases.

At one time the daylily's greatest liability was considered to be a limited color range — lemon-yellow to orange-red. But during the past five decades an explosion of named daylily cultivars (more than 36,000) has encompassed nearly the entire color spectrum, as well as adding new flower forms and heights that range from under 10 inches to more than four feet.

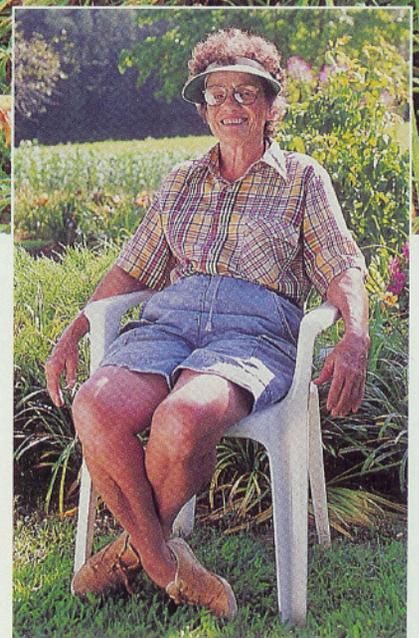
WHERE TO BUY DAYLILIES

Unfortunately, your local nursery is unlikely to stock many varieties beyond the popular, long-blooming "Stella de Oro." So now is the time to plot next month's trip to a specialty nursery or local hybridizer. According to Nell Jessup, a Grayson grower and recent past president of the American Hemerocallis Society, dedicated daylily growers offer exceptional diversity. "Most of us have kept up with the incredible advances that have been

made with daylilies," she says. "Frankly, you don't see as much variety in the large, commercial nurseries."

Metro Atlanta and north Georgia have an abundance of local collectors, part-time hybridizers and specialty nurseries that sell the latest cultivars. Many of these nurseries are labors of love — small, backyard operations that began as a hobby and aren't likely to be listed in the Atlanta Yellow Pages.

Visiting a specialty nursery also offers the opportunity to enjoy dazzling display gardens. Few sites are as intoxicating as a field of daylilies in all their June glory. "When I visit another garden, I always get an idea for something I could do at home to improve my own garden," confesses Ray B. Stephens, who hopes to similarly inspire visitors at the 1-acre Tucker lot he has dubbed Tucker Top Cat Gardens. Stephens is an accredited daylily judge and a director of the Greater Atlanta Hemerocallis Society, as well as an avid



Edith Sliger achieves spectacular results in her garden, above, by adding cow manure to planting sites and using a mulch of bark, pine straw or other available material.

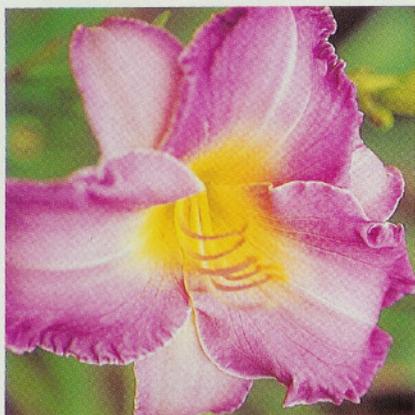
hobbyist hybridizer.

If you purchase a daylily the owner has originated, you're likely to take home a story as well as a plant. For example, Stephens laughingly recalls how one of his hybrids acquired its unusual moniker: "I came up with one

[daylily] that I really liked, and I asked my wife if I could name it after her. She said, 'Not my name!' So that's what I named it — 'Not My Name.' And now it's growing in the Atlanta Botanical Garden."

At large commercial nurseries you can expect to spend \$3 to \$10 for a pair of plant divisions (known in daylily lingo as "fans"), but daylily specialists often charge much less. Elizabeth Tedder, owner of Oak Grove Plantation and Gardens, in Newnan, has occasionally priced plants as low as a dollar a fan. If you have a large space to fill, growers sometimes have enough stock to offer one or more varieties quite cheaply. "I can usually recommend some inexpensive varieties that will make a big show," assures Tedder. But be forewarned — if you are in search of the truly exotic, expect to pay top dollar, from \$20 to as much as \$200 per fan.

Pure white and true blue are the only hues missing from the daylily spectrum. Color schemes tend to be highly personal choices, so visit several gardens to determine your own taste. Grayson



BUYING FROM A GEORGIA DAYLILY SPECIALIST

Although spring and fall are often touted as the best seasons to move or divide perennials, the hardy daylily can be transplanted nearly any time of year. This versatility means you can do your daylily shopping while the plants are in bloom. (If you're going to plant in the summer, however, experts recommend planting in the cool of the evening and giving new transplants a daily watering.) Here's a sampling of nearby daylily growers; if no hours are listed, you may want to call ahead.

Oak Grove Plantation and Gardens (on Highway 29 in Newnan, 463-3010). Located on the grounds of an 1830s plantation, Oak Grove features 4 acres of "theme" gardens, including a Victorian garden, herb garden, wildflower walk and sunken garden planted only with white

flowers. Garden tours cost \$3, with proceeds going toward the restoration of an old cemetery on the grounds. The nursery specializes in daylilies (more than 350 varieties) and carries an assortment of more than 200 different annuals and perennials. The nursery and gift shop (seeds, birdhouses, garden accessories) are open Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. between April 15 and July 15. All other times, call for an appointment.

Tucker Top Cat Gardens (2446 Cofer Circle, in Tucker, 938-9633). Local hybridizer Ray B. Stephens has created a mini-arboretum on his 1-acre Tucker lot, which features 30 trees seldom seen in residential landscapes, mixed perennial borders, a butterfly garden and a large hosta collection. Visitors in search of unusual daylilies will have a wide variety to

DAYLILY COLOR SCHEMES

grower Nell Jessup suggests planting daylilies in drifts of one color, using groups of near-white varieties like "Joan Senior" to separate stronger colors. On the other hand, Edith Sliger, of Edith's Daylilies, in Clarkesville, says, "One color just wouldn't satisfy me." She admits that when she plants daylilies, she usually "just sets them out," forming random color combinations — an approach that also appeals to Fayetteville grower Steven Stinchcomb. "It's almost impossible to clash daylily colors," he professes. "I've tried nearly every color combination there is, and they all seem to work." Stinchcomb also likes to add the elusive color blue to his garden by planting daylilies in front of blue hydrangea bushes.

Newnan daylily specialist Elizabeth Tedder lets the garden's theme dictate an appropriate color scheme. Her Victorian garden, which features an old-fashioned gazebo, contains soft pink and violet daylilies. Another border is built around chartreuse hostas and other plants with gold-variegated foliage and is punctuated with yellow daylilies.

Falling somewhere between the one-color approach and the "anything goes" philosophy is Tucker daylily expert Ray B. Stephens' formula. "I'll start out with, say, yellow," he explains. "Then, for every five

or six yellow daylilies I plant, I'll add one red. The lighter color brings your eye to the darker one, and it's a nice contrast." He has also combined lavender and purple daylilies in this pattern.

