

A Work in Progress

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The Ohio Hybridizers Historic Daylily Gardens came about much in the same way as described in LaVere Webster's article "A Living Library" in the Fall 2011 *Daylily Journal*. Just as the Troy, Michigan historic garden was created for the 2002 AHS National Convention, the concept for the Ohio Hybridizers Garden germinated in the spring of 2005 to celebrate an event, the 20th anniversary of the Metropolitan Columbus Daylily Society.

Historic events often spark enthusiasm for something new and exciting. Back in 1992 volunteers from MCDS collaborated with Oakes Daylilies in Tennessee to develop a display of modern daylilies for the Ameriflora Exposition at Franklin Park in Columbus, Ohio. The Region 2 Summer Meeting also met in Columbus that July, and 168 attendees toured the gardens. After Ameriflora, interest in gardening and landscaping exploded in central Ohio, and MCDS membership grew ten-fold over the decade of the 1990s. That original daylily garden was phased out in 1999, but the dream didn't die.

One of the most important requirements for a group wishing to develop a historic garden is to have a good working relationship with a public facility. MCDS has been blessed by its partnership with Franklin Park Conservatory. Since the mid-1990s, we have held meetings and daylily shows at the Conservatory, made annual cash contributions, provided volunteers to maintain our daylily collection, and donated divisions of the latest plants.

Twice a year MCDS purchases a collection of new cultivars and distributes them in a drawing to members who have been with us for at least a year and who promise to provide the best care of the plant for three years. At that time the member keeps one fan and returns the remainder for the auction. For many years a portion of the returning plants was donated to either Inniswood Gardens in Westerville, Ohio or to the Conservatory. We believe in being generous to our partners!

Then a most fortunate event took shape. In 2000 Franklin Park Conservatory and the Columbus Recreation and Parks Department developed an elaborate landscape Master Plan for the 88-acre park. With the local economy rolling, millions of dollars were pledged to enlarge the historic Victorian Palm House, creating facilities for weddings, the Brides' Garden, Asian and Mediterranean rooftop gardens, a production greenhouse, a 4-acre Community Garden Campus, and what they termed "small garden vignettes" for affiliate plant societies. By 2005 projects were underway in the newly named Franklin Park Conservatory and Botanical Gardens, and our new Ohio Hybridizers Daylily Garden became a reality.

The original concept developed by Alan Hersh and I was to collect representative cultivars from as many historic and current Ohio hybridizers listed in the AHS registration records as could be found, to encourage new hybridizers to register their plants, and to educate the public by showcasing Ohio's AHS award-winning cultivars. Naively, we planned to collect only 150 cultivars for three beds arranged by decade and two for our special historic collections. MCDS members and the Conservatory staff were enthused, beds were designed, and donations rolled in.

Another milestone occurred on Saturday evening, July 2, 2005. Alan and Joyce Hersh, Charles and Cynthia Lucius, Bill and Gail Johannes, and I were attending the banquet at the Cincinnati AHS Convention. Some glasses of wine were involved. We were bragging about our beautiful gardens back in Columbus when someone said, "You know, we are the biggest club in the country and have a gorgeous garden started—we ought to host a convention." As many other convention organizers could also attest—what were we thinking! Nevertheless, the die was cast. By July 2006 we had planted our 150 cultivars, and the newly designated AHS Historic Daylily Display Garden was dedicated. But now, we were setting sail into a convention plan with Charles and Cynthia Lucius at the helm. America will rediscover Columbus in 2012!

The beauty of collecting daylilies in Ohio lies in its wealth of people who contribute to our gardening heritage. Alan Hersh identified over 70 hybridizers by searching AHS registration records. With that list in hand, we hit the road, collecting donations from members of societies all over Ohio. Plants also arrived from Minnesota, Michigan, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, North Dakota, and North Carolina. It was remarkably easy. Daylily people are so generous, and our local hybridizers showered us with introductions to display in our new gardens.

The gardens grew exponentially to 15 beds of 800 cultivars and species by the end of 2011. At some point I started to believe that we could find every Ohio daylily receiving an AHS Honorable Mention, Award of Merit, and Stout Award. Actually, we are close to that goal. Five beds in the garden showcase award-winning daylilies, including a complete Stout collection.

I would like to think that the development of our garden has influenced new hybridizers. Please encourage the 13 men and women who registered their first daylily since 2005 as introduced in my article "From Simple Beginnings" in the Fall 2011 edition of the *Region 2/Great Lakes Daylily Newsletter*. This spring we hope to add more Ohioans who registered their first plants in 2011.

The Steve Moldovan Memorial Daylily Collection evolved following his unexpected death in 2007. Awarded the Bertrand Farr Medal all the way back in 1992, Steve's career is legendary in hybridizing circles. Spanning over 50 years, his work illustrates the best qualities of daylilies that we wish to teach. After his death, Region 2 honored Steve by sponsoring the Steve Moldovan Mentoring Award.

In 2010 we transplanted 50 clumps of Moldovan cultivars into a whole new section of the garden. It was an extremely cold and wet spring that year with a lot of work to complete. One of my favorite photos that spring was of Alan Hersh, Steve Williams, and the late Jane Saliaris celebrating the completion of mulching the newly planted garden in the rain. That collection also thrived, and by the end of 2011 it numbered over 250 of the 466 registered Moldovan daylilies and is still growing.

Our earliest Moldovan cultivar in the garden to date is *Hemerocallis* 'Buried Treasure' (Moldovan, 1961). In that era Steve was both a high school teacher and a learner who understood the value of mentoring. In 2003 Steve wrote, "Looking back into the past I can only remember with fondness the many, great people that I have had the honor and pleasure to come into contact with during my travels through daylily hybridizing. Meeting, working with and befriending some of the true pioneers of daylilies the likes of Orville Fay, David Hall, Elmer Claar, "Mr. Mac" MacMillan, Edna Spalding, Virginia Peck, Robert Griesbach, Pauline Henry, Brother Charles Reckamp and the "king"

of daylilies himself, R. W. "Bill" Munson, Jr. has been an experience that no amount of money could ever hope to buy." Through a continuing program to trade northern and southern-bred plants, Steve Moldovan and Bill Munson enhanced the genetics of daylilies that thrive in variable conditions.

Steve had a passion for clear color, hardiness, and excellence of the whole plant. These plant qualities are shared by Ohio hybridizer Richard Norris who says, "I have stated on numerous occasions that *H. 'Coral Majority'* (Norris, 2004) is my favorite introduction. This is for the reason of the color, the budding and branching, the rebloom and the overall plant habit. Much of that quality is due to the genetic input from Steve's *H. 'South Seas'* (Moldovan, 1993). This fine introduction has excellent branching and bud count as well as the best overall plant habit as can be found. The color is unique and beguiling. If that plant had occurred in my seedling fields, I am not positive that I would have seen its potential the way that Steve was able to. The ability to see color with the perception of an accomplished artist was one of his many talents."

Roy Woodhall, also well represented in our garden, was Steve's best friend and partner for 30 years. He remembers, "Back when you were lucky to get one introduction out of every 1000 seedlings, Steve selected only the best. He always said that a good daylily had to be more than a pretty face. He preached plant habit to everyone who would listen. He was never afraid to use evergreen daylilies in his harsh climate because he knew that only the hardy would survive." Roy has registered 21 cultivars from Steve's selections since 2007. He also remembers that Steve was generous with his daylilies and donated hundreds to many regions and the AHS. Canadian Dave Mussar agrees that Steve Moldovan was most generous in his advice and frequently gave away plants and pollen to fellow hybridizers. Dave believes that "*H. 'Vertical Horizon'* (Moldovan, 2005) still has a promising future in hybridizing emerging patterns in daylilies."

Steve actively praised the work of younger hybridizers. Mike and Sandy Holmes, Bill Chambers, Roger DeLongchamp, Ted Slanic, and the late Eric Moore invested sweat equity every summer to work with Steve and Roy's seedling crops. They battled the nearly overwhelming flooding and drainage problems in 2004 and 2005 at Moldovan Gardens in Avon, Ohio when many lined out introductions and 20,000 seedlings were lost. These hybridizers, also represented in our gardens, are continuing outstanding hybridizing work begun in those years.

Ultimately, mentoring may be Steve Moldovan's most important legacy. Many Ohio hybridizers can share Richard Norris' experience. Richard recalls, "During the years of my introduction to daylilies in the late 80's and early 90's, I was fortunate to be able to spend many a morning in bloom season with Steve as he hybridized. He patiently explained what he was doing and why. I did my best to be a sponge and absorb everything I could from him. When I asked him a specific question, he would elaborate on his perspectives on whatever I wanted to know. In the course of a few years I was able to learn volumes about daylilies and the daylily world. I can state with a great deal of confidence that I would not be where I am today without the input of Steve Moldovan." Richard dedicated *H. 'Memorial to Steve'* (Norris, 2008) to his mentor.

The theme of our 2012 AHS Convention is "Discover Columbus' Passion for Daylilies." We invite you to revel in the history of Ohio hybridizing from 1928 through 2012 and the species and representative early hybrids leading up to that time in our Ohio Hybridizers Historic Daylily Gardens. As Steve Moldovan once wrote, "These are the memories that gold is made from."