



NEWSPAPER ARTICLES

All About Daylilies (August 30, 2025)

By Kate Mackey, Tulare/Kings Counties Master Gardener

The daylily is a staple in the beds of Central Valley residents for its beauty, low maintenance, drought tolerance, and general freedom from pests and diseases. The botanical name is *Hemerocallis*, which comes from the Greek words *hemera*, meaning 'day', and *kallos*, meaning 'beauty'. The name speaks to the fact that the blooms only last a single day, but since each "scape" or stalk can have 12 to 15 buds, and a mature plant can have four to six scapes, you'll enjoy continuous blooms for several days. Despite their name, daylilies are not true lilies. True lilies grow from bulbs, while daylilies grow from fleshy roots that form a crown, and from these crowns form long stems called 'scapes' that hold the flower above the foliage of leaves below.



Daylilies originated in Asia, going west with explorers back to Europe, where their popularity grew. They were then brought to the New World by early colonists. Their beauty is rivaled by the fact that they are edible and can be eaten raw or cooked according to your taste. However, they are toxic to cats.

These flowers can tolerate a wide range of climates and are hardy from zones 3 to 10. They grow quickly and coexist well with other plants - except for *H. fulva*, which has large, bright orange flowers and is considered invasive. The daylily is easy to plant and ideally should be planted in the spring as soon as the ground can be worked, and again in the fall, at least six weeks before the first frost. They thrive in full sun and don't like to compete with other plants that take a lot of water or nutrients. Dig a hole wide enough for the roots to spread out and deep enough to cover the crown (where the roots meet the leaves) about one inch. Amend the soil with aged manure or compost and fill in the hole lightly. Water until the soil is well saturated.

Like most plants, newly-planted daylilies require more frequent watering until they are established. Though they are drought-tolerant (tolerant being the operative word), they prefer at least an inch of water per week. Mulching, as with most plants, will decrease water loss and suppress weeds. They do not require fertilizing, but sometimes can benefit from a general-purpose fertilizer (10-10-10) once a year to promote blooms. Deadheading is not necessary unless you do not want the plant to produce seeds. Pinch off the blooms when they begin to wilt. Once all the buds have bloomed from the scape, you can cut the whole stem back if you want. In the spring, remove all dead foliage from the previous year to promote new growth. Daylilies are aggressive growers and need to be divided about every three to five years. The division will not only bring more plants but will also invigorate the plants.

The best time to divide daylilies is after they have finished blooming, typically in late summer or early fall. You want to plant the divisions (clumps) so they have enough time to adapt before it gets very hot or very cold. Start by digging up the entire root clump and removing as much of the soil as you can. Washing off the roots helps get rid of soil. Starting at the top of the plant (the crown), divide the clumps so that each new plant has 3 to 4 clumps with healthy roots emerging. Then plant the divisions the way you would with a new plant (see above). You can also grow daylilies in containers, but make sure you give them plenty of room--the bigger, the better. September

There are seemingly limitless varieties of this flower. There are fragrant varieties. The well-known yellow Stella De Oro does have a scent, but like other daylilies, the scent is mild compared to other flowers. The Spider types of daylilies have petals that are slightly more elongated but come in a variety of colors. Daylily varieties have different bloom times, differing scape lengths, and a mind-blowing choice of colors and color combinations so that the gardener can plant for height and bloom time and keep the landscape colorful and interesting.

Harvesting these plants means fun in the kitchen, as every part of the plant is edible. The petals can be added to a salad for color and interest. The scapes and leaves can be cut and sautéed. **Make sure that you are using daylilies and not Asiatic lilies, which are toxic.** Also, take a little taste of the flower petal to see if it agrees with you and you do not have an allergy to it. Here is a recipe for a salad:

- 1 cup of fresh daylily petals
- 2 cups of mixed greens
- 1 cup of cherry tomatoes
- ½ cup of crumbled feta cheese
- ¼ cup of sliced almonds
- 1 tablespoon of olive oil

- 1 tablespoon of balsamic vinegar
- Salt and pepper to taste

I think you will find this flower both beautiful and an added organic food for your pleasure.

Are you interested in becoming a Master Gardener? Our next class will begin in January 2026 and run through May 2026, with weekly classes. For more information, visit: <https://ucanr.edu/site/tulare-kings-master-gardeners/become-master-gardener>.

If interested, please fill out a survey: <https://surveys.ucanr.edu/survey.cfm?surveynumber=10225>.

Questions? Call the Master Gardeners:

Tulare County: (559) 684-3325, Tues & Thurs, 9:30-11:30;

Kings County: (559) 852-2736, Thursday Only, 9:30-11:30 a.m

Visit our website for past articles, sign up for our e-newsletter, or email us with your questions:

http://ucanr.edu/sites/UC_Master_Gardeners/

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/mgtularekings14/> ; Instagram at: @mgtularekings