

Local gardener 'digs' daylilies, offers tours

- CHERYL MCCORMACK Bismarck Tribune



Susan Holland is surrounded in the backyard of her Bismarck home by blooming plants and flowers, including a stand of colorful B.J. McMillen daylilies. Holland is a member of the Central North Dakota Daylily Society and is looking forward to next summer's meeting of the American Hemerocallis Society in Bismarck.

- MIKE MCCLEARY PHOTOS, TRIBUNE

(photo missing) A Wee Folk daylily, about the size of a golf ball, is one of many varieties of daylilies in Susan Holland's backyard flower garden.

About 300 daylilies and an additional 300 perennials bloom annually in Susan and Erik Holland's backyard, which was once a dog run.

"That was exciting to me," said Susan Holland, garden writer and garden coach. "I had a blank slate. I could design it."

The Hollands moved to a pink stucco Storybook-style house in Bismarck's Cathedral District eight years ago. The home, located on West Avenue C, is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. And when the Hollands moved in they brought a trailer full of plants from their St. Paul, Minn., garden.

"I garden with the whimsy the house inspires," said Susan Holland, who has a newfound love for miniature daylilies and miniature hostas. "My collection is very specialized."

Holland House Gardens features many varieties of daylilies, ranging in size from one foot to several feet tall, in every color of the rainbow. Susan Holland plants her daylilies and hostas in curving beds of field stone, designed and created by her husband, Erik Holland. The stones are collected from a friend's farm.

"I'm the plant person, he's the muscles and the stone design," she said.

Hundreds of people tour the Hollands' garden each year. It's not unusual to see 500 people walk through their gate, any given summer.

"The garden is beautiful, inviting and aromatic," said visitor Kathleen Donahue. "Every time I go, I discover a unique daylily or hosta, or a unique plant I never realized could grow in North Dakota."

"It's a very serene space," Susan Holland added. "It's not just for us to enjoy. After putting all that effort in, we want to share it."

There are more than 80,000 varieties of daylilies for Susan Holland to choose from when planting her garden. She said the "Wee Folk" miniature daylily is one of her favorites.

"I like the miniature ones and I like the really tall ones," she said. "I love to play with scale."

The botanical name for daylily is "hemerocallis," which derives from two Greek words meaning "beauty" and "day." In general, a single daylily bud is in bloom for just one day before it begins to wither.

Susan Holland says she loves to grow daylilies because they are easy to care for, easy to hybridize and they make "wonderful" subjects for photography.

"It's a hobby and anyone can do it," she said.

To keep their flowerbeds interesting and fresh, the Hollands host a daylily sale on their driveway twice a year. They also share excess flowers with family and friends.

"I've been moving bigger plants out to make room for miniatures," Susan Holland said. "Unless I really love them...then they stay for years."

The Hollands are members of the American Hemerocallis Society (AHS) and the Central North Dakota Daylily Society. And in 2018, Bismarck will play host to the AHS Region One summer event.

Approximately 200 members from North Dakota, South Dakota, Minnesota, Manitoba, Iowa and Nebraska will gather to celebrate daylilies and tour gardens. The Hollands' yard will be one of just a handful visited.

Melanie Mason, a well-known hybridizer residing in New York, will be on-hand to share her knowledge of daylilies. Good food, lectures and daylily auctions are all part of the fun.

The Central North Dakota Daylily Society is hosting the two-day event. Anyone can become a member of this local club. A \$5 annual membership gives you access to daylily auctions and sales, lectures and garden tours, as well as a free daylily plant.

"Gardening, as a whole, is good for the soul," Susan Holland said, smiling.