If you've been down Main Street in Kissimmee lately, you are sure to have seen day lilies blooming in the medians.

Day lilies are a beautiful and easy perennial flower to grow in Florida. With their long blooming periods and low maintenance requirements, they are the perfect addition to any Florida landscape.

Day lilies are of the family, in the genus *Hemerocallis* - *Hemer* is the Greek for "day" and *callis* for "beauty." Therefore, "day lily" means "beauty for a day." The day lilies we see today have been developed from native Chinese species. Early settlers from Asia and Europe brought many of the original species with them to America.

Thanks to hybridizers, day lilies are now available in a variety of forms, sizes and colors. Color selection includes shades yellow, pink, purple and near white. They also come in several color patterns, either one color, a blending of two or more colors, or bicolor, which occurs when the petals and sepals are different colors.

Day lily blooms also exist in a variety of forms, such as single flowers, double flowers, star-shaped, trumpet-shaped, or ruffled, just to name a few.

Day lilies are easily adapted to a variety of cultural conditions. As with any plants added to a landscape, they should not be planted haphazardly. To get the most out of day lilies, grow them in clumps of 10 or more plants of similar color. A mass planting of day lilies of similar color or of related hues, is more effective than a mixed planting.

Other uses for day lilies include planting in terraces close to the house, underneath trees, on slopes, near a gate entrance and in borders.

When choosing day lilies, take into account the height. It is just as important, if not more important, than the color of the flower. Day lilies more than 36 inches are suitable for foundation plantings, the back of day lily beds or in mixed borders. Medium day lilies, those 16 to 36 inches can be used in most settings. Dwarf day lilies, those 12 inches or less, are best used for border plantings. There should be a plant tag on the container stating the maximum height.

Day lilies will grow in full sun or filtered shade. Heavy shade should be avoided, producing thin, spindly growth and poor flowering. They can be planted throughout the year in Florida. Plant the day lilies 18 to 24 inches apart. Most varieties will multiply quickly to fill in the empty space. Water newly planted day lilies and keep the soil moist until the plants are well established.

Place mulch around day lilies to help retain soil moisture, reduce weeds and moderate soil temperatures. A 2 inch layer of pine needles, leaves, or shredded bark are among the most desirable mulches.

Day lilies can survive temporary dry conditions because of their extensive root systems. However, the plant's bloom size, number of blooms, growth and vigor, can be adversely affected by prolonged drought.

With proper selection, planting procedures and general maintenance, day lilies should provide you with many months of blooms during warm temperatures. For more information, call Osceola County Master Gardeners, Monday to Friday from 10am to 2pm, at 321-697-3000.

Incredible edible landscapes
Interested in creating an edible landscape, where you can consume the results of your hard labor? Tom Wichman, the University of Florida's State Master Gardener Coordinator, will lead a presentation on the topic at 1:30 PM, May 14, 2003 at the extension service building. Call to register.

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