



Henderson County Master Gardeners Weekly News Article April 24, 2017

A Neglected Garden Comes Alive by Lydia Holley

I once heard a gardener remark, “Every type of weather is good for something in the garden.” Well, of course, that’s true. Dry weather is good for cacti, yucca, and other dry weather plants. Abundant rain is great for cannas, Louisiana irises, hostas, and other moisture loving plants.



Spring rains are good for my great-grandmother’s garden, which has been neglected for years. My great-grandmother died in 1980. My grandmother lived there until her death in 2009. The new owner checks on the house and property a few times a year, but does not live there. I drive by occasionally, just to look. I am always amazed how much continues to live and bloom in her neglected garden, and the abundance and types of plants that have lived through the years, even though the memorable drought of 2011. This garden has never received any type of supplemental watering.

Each year, I am thrilled to see blooms from daffodils, irises, surprise lilies, and even a crape myrtle that I played under as a child. Never fertilized, never mulched, and never watered except by rainfall, these are the plants that continue to thrive through all the adverse weather conditions that have been thrown their way. It amazes me.

When it rains, new blooms come to life in her garden. One year, I noticed some daylilies beginning to bloom. I had never noticed these blooms before, and was amazed that they were still alive. These daylilies are *hemerocallis fulva*, the orange daylily scorned by daylily aficionados. *Hemerocallis fulva* is also known as the ditch lily, because in places where there is adequate moisture, these daylilies thrive, even in the ditches lining the roadways. These China natives are tough survivors. So much so, they are considered an invasive species in Georgia, Kentucky and Illinois.

Ditch lilies are unlike most daylilies because their root structures are aggressive, long, and thick. These plants crowd out others, so most people are warned away from planting them, especially with other daylilies, as they can take over a large area. Of course, in the right spot, where they are allowed to spread, they can be an easy care alternative, and many people love this heirloom plant. I myself have planted some in my garden, and take delight knowing that they are clones of the daylilies in my great-grandmother’s garden.

Whether you love or hate these common daylilies, blooming in my great-grandmother’s garden, they are beautiful to me. They remind me that gardens can sometimes live longer than the gardener. And that there is a silver lining in the cloudy skies of a rainy day.

Henderson County Master Gardener Association wishes to thank everyone that came to the Plant Sale on Saturday, April 22. I hope your plants live as long as my great-grandmother’s.

For more information, call 903-675-6130, email hendersonCMGA@gmail.com or visit www.henderson-co-tx-mg.org.