

The “Real Reasons” New Daylilies Cost So Much

by Karen “Boog” Burgoyne

The pricing of daylilies has come up recently, and it appears as though I probably should have visited this point more thoroughly in my guide to hybridizing for newbies. Gasp! How could this have passed me by. Well, most likely I was too embroiled in the seductive qualities of my future seedling's ability to create the perfect cultivar every time, and it's near immortal tendencies to withstand any and all crud you threw at it.

Well, it's time to give a blow by blow mission statement on how to price that seedling you are sure is going to up-end the daylily world. First of all, when pricing the seedling, one must consider what all went into having that seedling come about. What I am going to describe and detail are the finer points of Southern hybridizing, the things you won't read in books approved by the AHS. First off, there are no finer points. There are a lot of points, but not in any stretch of the imagination are they fine. When one hybridizes in the South, one gets up way too early to be anything but rude to the rest of the world. Most of the time you are running outside to beat the heat and you end up with your precious coffee slopped all over the front of you. There goes your shirt, your temper, and all clear-headed, well-thought-out crosses for the first hour of pollen dusting. As you cuss the coffee on your shirt and try to at least salvage some of it by sucking on your shirt, you usually manage to walk through at least one well-placed, HUMONGOUS spider web, with resident spider from Mars squarely in the middle but now residing on your forehead. Your shirt drops out of your mouth as you screamcuss, (that is one word, I just made it up. It fits though, I promise!), jump up, twist around, slap yourself silly, and cuss some more as you just decorated your forehead with spider guts. You tripped over something that might have moved, but you can't see it cause your eyes are glued shut with spider webs which also had the squooshed spider plastered to your forehead. You just know it's still alive cause you felt a leg move. You just fell on your hiney (cusswords removed here to protect innocent eyes), and all that frozen pollen you saved from last year is now spread across your lovely collection of dying daffodil leaves. Whatever moved down at your legs is now slithering across your sneaker. You can't remove the spider web. Is this a fire ant bed I've landed on? Y'all that introduction just entered the \$150 price range.



Okay, so finally you get up, wipe off the spider webs, spider guts, and several dozen fire ants, discovering what was moving at your feet was your cat who appears to be highly amused, and you enter the garden. You have no thawed frozen pollen left. That's in the daffodil leaves and only God knows what is hiding in those leaves. You sure aren't going to join God in that knowledge, if you have a semblance of brains, even without coffee. So, you will have to collect pollen from today's delightful blooming daylilies, not a one of which you planned on using for today's crosses. This totally screws up all those long Winter nights you spent pouring over the checklists, curled up safe and sound with your hot cocoa, and non-spider web adorned hair. This point does not escape you either, but diligently you go on, and find not a single grain of pollen is available, yes it's that ol' Viagra moment for the anthers, they just aren't up to it yet, sorry, open for it yet. Even in the South we have this happen, but we know what to do. Well, just pull 'em off anyway...HAH! Some of us have razor sharp thumbnail sides that can open an anther quicker than a moccasin can strike. Some of us don't, so we squish the thing open. Some of us do it the right way - go inside, drop the anther on a paper plate, label what it is, and put it under lights for a time to be determined by how hot it is already and what time it was when you brushed off the last fire ant. Most of us go for the thumbnail method, which usually means you have to go get another anther, because the spider is still on your brain and your coordination is not what it's supposed to be.

Believe it or not, the rest of the hybridizing for the day goes pretty much like it does in the North - swatting skeeters, losing pollen, flowers that take fifteen hours to open, losing pollen trying to force anthers open, swatting flies sent personally to you by Satan himself, losing more pollen, and forgetting which anther is in the left corner of your mouth. You write what you think it is on the tag, which by the way you dropped 19 times losing more pollen, which means your entire long cross of AVANT GUARD x BELOVED DECEIVER is actually AVANT GUARD x MEPHISwhatever.

The whole time you are going about this pleasant hobby, your legs are doing this weird tingling thing and IT'S moving upwards into the nether parts of your body. You occasionally wonder at this, and then you are done. It's 10:00 a.m. You are exhausted and coffee depleted. You think you have managed to impregnate 300 or so flowers this morning, and you are in a state of bliss not visited since your wedding night. Then it rains. Ohhh Boyyy, does it rain. How many languages can you cuss in??? I can cuss in five, so far, plus the three I made up just this year. So, you go inside. The price of that new introduction just rose to \$175, for aggravation purposes.

Remember that crawling sensation on your legs, oh, you don't? Well, you will vividly remember wondering about it. Before you sucked coffee off your shirt did you, as you stumbled to the garden, remember to dust yourself down in a cloud of Sulphur or spray yourself all over in Eau de Off??? No? You didn't??? Well, hey, guess what? You are now the vacation spot for the very trendiest chiggers of all of North America. The price of that cultivar, that eventually will bring you the Lennington Award - \$350. Somebody has to pay for that CHIGGER x CALAMINE LOTION cross, and the abrasion laser plastic surgery that you had to have to remove the scars from your legs from scratching and scratching and scratching 3000 chigger bites, that ruined your marriage for at least a week, but I'm not going to go into why.