

MoKanOk Daylily, Spring 2011

Flint Hills Hemerocallis Society

By Christopher E. Renner

“Look out any window and see what’s going on” is a line from a Bruce Hornsby song from the ‘80s. The song calls the listeners to be aware of the environment around them and to take steps to protect what they have before it is destroyed by development, pollution and human greed.

Manhattan’s Good Shepard Hospice House sits in a gentle valley surrounded by two Flint Hills. Built in 2009, the facility provides support for clients and their families as they “see what’s going on” in what is often a tragic playing out of life. The House provides residential care for terminally ill individuals in an atmosphere designed to be a home.

When you walk into the facility, you are greeted by a large family table and kitchen facility where family and friends can gather to share a meal and a laugh as well as a tear. The room looks out to the south onto a large semi-enclosed garden, which until last fall was fairly desolate except for a few shrubs and some young trees that will eventually provide a haven for those who want to sit and feel the Kansas wind caress them on a summer afternoon.

The resident rooms, each equipped to allow family members to stay with the loved ones, have large windows to view the panorama, and looking out for a moment allows one to take his/her mind off of life’s concerns. Come this spring and summer, the gardens will be aflame with the colors of daylilies thanks to the generous contributions and hard work of the Flint Hills Daylily Club.

In February 2010, Homecare and Hospice Director of Operations, Judine Mecseri, was my guest on a weekly radio show that I host, talking about the new facility and one of their major fundraisers. Following the program I asked her what had been done regarding landscaping. Mecseri said that the minimum was about all they could afford; the real effort was to build the new facility. So I asked her if she would like to see some daylilies in the gardens. “YES!” was the reply.

The club discussed the project, and following our annual sale, in September 2010, club members joined together to make a major contribution to the landscaping of Hospice House by donating hundreds of plants, and in a group effort worked to transform the rather barren landscaping into what promises to be a very colorful yet peaceful garden for everyone to enjoy as they come to be sheltered in embrace of home, family and love at house.

Frank Schmeidler, Flint Hills Daylily Society president, helped to coordinate the effort. On October 2, 2010, as residents and their families looked out and wondered what was going on, numerous club members assisted in the process of digging and preparing the soil, followed with planting the daylilies and finally mulching the beds. By the end of the day, over 90 varieties, from small to large, had been planted in the South and North gardens. Now they await spring rains and summer’s warmth to bring forth their blooms for everyone to enjoy.

MoKanOk Daylily, Summer 2011

Flint Hills Hemerocallis Society

By Ernie Minton

On Saturday, July 2, the atrium near the main entrance to the Manhattan Town Center Mall was beautifully adorned with more than 400 daylily blooms gathered and displayed by Flint Hills Daylily Society (FHDS) members. Mall shoppers were generally eager to browse the blooms and many took the time to cast their vote for their favorites. Invariably, folks are amazed by the impressive variation in color, size, and in some cases fragrance of these amazing blooms. They often remember the daylily from their youth as that tall yellow-orange flower that defied neglect and drought, and waved proudly in the hot Kansas wind in ditches around the otherwise stark farmstead landscape.

The Mall bloom display continues to be an important club activity supporting the goal of increasing the awareness and appreciation of daylilies in the community. The display routinely snags three or five new club members. In many cases, our collective club experience has been that this activity becomes the tipping point for a few people to take the next step and join the club. Frequently, these new members were already avid gardeners and usually were aware of the existence of a local group of Daylily enthusiast.

Our club typically has a separate table displaying Stout Silver Medal Winners. We continue to press for 100% representation of all plants that have received the award since its inception, and usually members bring in all but 4 or 5. A novel twist to the display this year was assembled by Dr. Steve Thien, **AHS** Region 11 Science Liaison and an active FHDS member. Steve is also an avid hybridizer who has produced a number of impressive seedlings over the years. Steve maintains very detailed record keeping associated with his hybridizing program. His records allow him to track seedlings back to their pod of origin. On the morning of the Mall bloom display, Steve had several separate seedling plants in bloom that had originated from the same pod. This display demonstrated the variation in coloration, size, form, etc. for full-sibling seedlings originating, not just from the same parents, but indeed from the same cross. This display was very informative and interesting.

Whether it is an interesting display, such as the seedling example cited above, our Stout table, or another unique arrangement of blooms, we think we have the most success in recruiting new members when we couple that activity with friendly, engaging conversation with guests that stop by the bloom display. It seems that nothing invites potential new members to take the next step like getting the real sense that they are wanted and will be valued by the club.

MoKanOk Daylily, Fall 2011

Flint Hills Hemerocallis Society

by Ernie Minton

On September 10, 2011, the Flint Hills Daylily Society (FHDS) held their annual plant sale at the downtown farmer's market in Manhattan, Kansas. This event has historically been the most important fund raising activity for the club. As is undoubtedly typical of other daylily clubs in the region, the sale represents the conclusion of a week or more of intense digging, washing, dividing and labeling plants in preparation for the sale. Our club celebrates a "job well-done" (and nearly complete for another year!) with a Friday evening potluck ahead of the sale on Saturday.

In the not too distant past, on the early morning of sale day, "early birds" (as they are known in the garage sale world) would greet workers as the sale tables were set up and the plants distributed among the tables in preparation for the official start of the sale. This type of garage sale enthusiasm, the excitement of knowing you are about to make the buy of the century, often carried the sale through the majority of the morning and occasionally resulted in an early sell out of the plant inventory. Even the "Stellas" were bought up in those days. In truth, a sell-out was relatively rare. Still, we all remember sales that, at their conclusion, had only a disheveled residual inventory that included many "root only" divisions, often missing tags from rough handling, and heading straight for the compost pile.

In more recent years, however, things seemed to have changed. Our casual observations, later confirmed by the club treasurer's report the following year at the first club meeting, suggested that sales seemed to have been declining. Given the state of the economy, this observation is certainly not a surprise. But, is the decline real or perceived? And, if real, over what period of time has the decline been taking place and how long might it last? As this is likely of interest to many daylily clubs in the region, especially those located in medium to smaller sized towns like Manhattan, Kansas, I decided to take a closer look at the actual data as the focus of this MoKanOk club report.

Our club treasurer, Ruby Zabel, kindly gathered the data from the most recent six annual sales of the FHDS.

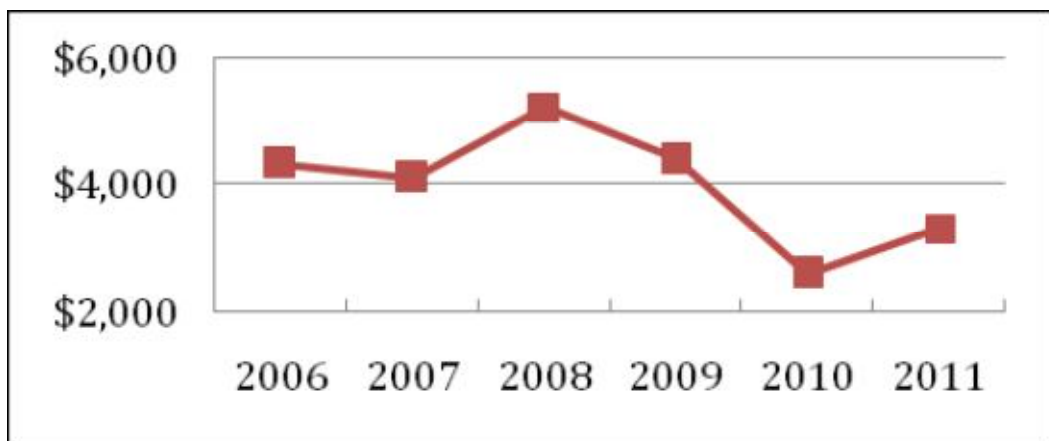


Figure 1. Net plant sale profits of the Flint Hills Daylily Society from 2006-2011.

Regardless of whether or not this relatively small data set suggests a real trend, the implications are interesting to consider. Perhaps the situation is similar in other regions? If so, it may warrant close attention and evaluation, as these sales tend to be an important source of resources for local clubs. In coming years, clubs may need to become more nimble and creative in identifying alternative events to generate resources to fund club activities.