

HISTORY OF THE FLINT HILLS DAYLILY SOCIETY MANHATTAN, KANSAS

(As recalled by [MARIAN QUINLAN](#) - June 2003)

Article provided courtesy of Tom Hittle, Archway Gardens

Leon Delmez was the FHDS founder and 1st President of FHDS. Leon's son, Donald, donated the majority of Leon's daylily collection to the K-State Gardens, thus founding the Delmez Daylily Gardens at the KSU Gardens.

The interest in Hemerocallis was fired by members of the Town and Country Garden Club of Manhattan, Kansas: Earl Ray, Dorothy Bradley and Leon Delmez. Earl and Dorothy had been avid iris growers and Leon and his wife, Mary had been growing gladiolas for commercial florists and trade.

In the mid-seventies when I first joined Town and Country Garden Club, Earl had passed away, but Dorothy Bradley and the Delmez had joined the American Hemerocallis Society and were sharing the Journal and information willingly with the membership.

There was a group of hybridizers from Kansas and Missouri and others interested that had formed a club called, Kansas Pioneers. Leon and Mary Delmez joined with this group. Some of the hybridizers were: Daisy Ferrick, Ivan Beyer, Lloyd Schoonover, Russell, Manoni (Sol and Ruth), Smith (Stewart and Mavis), Lenington (George and Lucille) Wild, Backes (Harry was working on blue out of Wichita). Often they met in Topeka and the Delmez would invite members of Town and Country to attend with them. Dorothy Bradley, Helene Schmitz, Martha Miller, Glenna Clark, Alice Duncan and myself met many of the local hybridizers this way. I joined AHS in 1980. My first "field trip" to Lenington Gardens with Leon and Mary was quite memorable...I had never seen so many different colors, shapes, sizes of daylilies. Lucille was hybridizing the miniature or small-flowered; George was diligently working for WHITE.

On buying trips the hybridizers would dig large clumps, not just a fan or two, so we could buy newer introductions and higher priced ones. We would split the cost and share among ourselves. Thus our gardens were usually the same. However, Leon and Mary had acreage and would buy new varieties and began selling and dabbling in hybridizing—thus we have our MARY D, ORANGE SURPRISE and his last and only registered daylily, now called LEON DELMEZ MEMORIAL.

When Dorothy Bradley became terminally ill, she called me and wanted me to have her daylilies (she said Frank, her husband was color-blind and had no interest in them). Since I already had most of her collection, I approached the Town and Country Garden Club for ideas for a planting in memory of Dorothy Bradley. Through the

efforts of Sue Shultis, then President of the Town and Country Garden Club, a sight at the Riley County Historical Museum was chosen. Dorothy had been a docent for the Museum and Jean Dallas, director, was enthused with the proposal. Blueville Nursery prepared the plat and members, under Sue Shultis, moved the daylilies. This was the first public Display of Hemerocallis in Manhattan. Dorothy Bradley had tried to establish plantings at Kansas State University, but most were destroyed by construction. The common orange lilies prevailed.



Often Leon Delmez and I discussed organizing a group interested in daylilies in memory of Dorothy. We compiled a list of names and I contacted them by telephone or letters. In October 1987 that list was:

Bertwell, Gayle	Langemaier, Vera*	Roach, John
Brooks, Ken	Love, Judy and Lily	Rogers, Mary Lee-Emporia
Clark, Glenna and Paul*	Mattson, Richard	Schmitz, Helene and Bob*
Delmez, Leon and Mary*	McKenna, Ethel	Schwartz, Irma-Glasco
Duncan, Alice and Dale**	Medlin, Donna and Roger*	Shultis, Sue and Ken*
Gilbert, Adam-Emporia	Merton, Robert	Slemen, Betty
Glenn, Gertrude	Miller, Martha and Mike*	Thornburgh, Pauline-Topeka
Jackson, Donna-Wamego	Pugh, Jim and Kay	Trude, Norma-Perry
Jones, Pat-Glasco	Quinlan, Marian and Jim*	Trumpeter, Rev. A.J.-Topeka
Kimmins, Kent	Rathbone, Lynne and Don*	Wolfington, Mary-Topeka

Stewart and Mavis Smith came from Columbia, Missouri to formally organize our club for membership in the American Hemerocallis Society. Both Mavis and Stewart were well-known hybridizers. The name, Flint Hills Hemerocallis Society, was Leon Delmez' choice. In 2005, members voted to change the name to the Flint Hills Daylily Society.

Area garden clubs at that time included:

Manhattan Garden Club

Marysville Garden Club

**College Hill Garden Club

Topeka Garden Clubs

Men's Garden Club

Lawrence Garden Clubs

*Town and Country Garden Club