

Meadowlark Memories

Meadowlark Botanical Gardens and the Northern Virginia Daylily Society

By Janice Kennedy, President, Northern Virginia Daylily Society
with assistance from Pat Cochenour and Doris Rodriguez



(Photograph by Pat Cochenour)

A partial view of one of the daylily beds and the beautiful lake.

The Northern Virginia Daylily Society (NVDS) and Meadowlark Botanical Gardens are a dynamic duo when it comes to creating beautiful displays of daylilies for the public to enjoy. Vienna residents Dr. Gardiner Means and his wife Dr. Caroline Ware gave the land used to construct Meadowlark Botanical Gardens to the Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority (NVPRA) in 1980. Means and Ware donated the 74-acre farm that they had purchased in 1935 with the provision that it “remain a haven for trees, shrubs and flowers to preserve the bounty of the Virginia country side.” NVPRA quickly expanded the property to 95 acres by acquiring a contiguous 21-acre parcel and began work on planning a public garden.

Within several years time, the first plantings were installed along with three lakes and several trails. By April 1987, Meadowlark Botanical Gardens was ready to officially open to the public. Hosta, daylilies, azaleas, lilacs, Siberian

iris and native trees were added along with three gazebos placed in different parts of the garden. A visitors center was added in 1992 and in 1998, an events facility, the Atrium, was completed. The plantings were expanded with a dwarf conifer collection, perennial, butterfly and herb gardens and ornamental grasses. In 1999, a regional native plant conservation program was initiated as Meadowlark expanded its emphasis on public education and display of regional plant diversity with Potomac River Valley collection. Today, Meadowlark receives over 100,000 visitors annually and is preparing to celebrate its 25th anniversary in 2012.

Tony Welsbacher and Pat Cochenour were among the early volunteers at Meadowlark. Tony, then president of the Potomac Hosta Club, was involved in early planning for Meadowlark and helped select hosta for the shade garden. He also worked with Jim Turner, the NVRPA Landscape Division



(Photograph by Pat Cochenour)

The Northern Virginia Daylily Society installed a mailbox for flyers explaining the Stout medal.

Superintendent, on expanding the daylily collection from three beds to eight, including one that features all the Stout medal winners. Both Tony and Jim donated many daylilies from their own gardens to Meadowlark as did other local daylily collectors such as Adrienne Whyte. Pat Cochenour began volunteering in the visitors center in 1992, but she quickly moved out to the gardens to join Tony in the daylily and hosta collections. In 1995, NVDS was formed as a new daylily club serving the Northern Virginia area, and Tony, Adrienne and Pat, among the original members, made sure that NVDS provided funding and volunteer support for the daylily collection at Meadowlark. To date, NVDS has installed a mailbox for flyers explaining the Stout medal, donated the annual Stout medal winner plant, sponsored Meadowlark as an AHS display garden in 2007 and, most recently, increased financial support to help offset park authority budget cuts.



(Photograph by Pat Cochenour)

Another view of one of the daylily beds.

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Today Pat Cochenour works closely with head horticulturalist Doris Rodriguez on keeping the daylily beds in tip-top condition. Each year Pat assesses the plantings and decides which clumps either need to be reduced in size or culled, and over the years, Pat has donated many modern daylilies and her own introductions to update the collection. Pat also overwinters all daylily acquisitions to make sure that rust is not introduced in the gardens at Meadowlark. As the daylily collection has matured, Meadowlark is now able to hold a sale each summer. In 2006, NVDS began holding a public exhibition where the public votes on their favorite bloom on display from members and the Meadowlark collection. Meadowlark's summer sale gets publicized at the exhibition, and it's an opportunity for NVDS to provide public education and meet potential new members. Pat's introduction *Hemerocallis* 'Meadowlark Memories' (Cochenour, 2007)



(Photograph by Pat Cochenour)

H. 'Meadowlark Memories'
(Cochenour, 2007)

was very popular in this year's exhibition. The entire stock of this cultivar is planted at Meadowlark and is currently only available from them.

If you would like to visit Meadowlark Botanical Gardens, they are open every day except Thanksgiving, Christmas Day, New Year's Day or when snow and ice cover the trails. There is a \$5 admission charge, but 55 and over are admitted for \$2.50 and annual passes are available for local residents. The gardens are located at 9750 Meadowlark Gardens Court in Vienna, Virginia, about 3 miles from Tysons Corner and the Beltway. Go to <http://www.nvrpa.org/parks/meadowlark/index.php> for more information and driving directions.

The gardens are beautiful in every season, but of course the summer is best for seeing Meadowlark's collection of over 600 daylily cultivars in full bloom.



(Photograph by Don Garrett)

NVDS Exhibition - July 18, 2009
(L-R) Pat Cochenour and Doris Rodriguez



(Photograph by Janice Kennedy)

NVDS Exhibition 2009
(L-R) Fred Beekan, Pat Cochenour, Pat Ball and Ann Frank

REGION 3 NOMINATING COMMITTEE ANNOUNCEMENT

The Region 3 Nominating Committee consisting of Faith Bange, Paulette Miller, and Kathryn D'Alessandro is soliciting qualified and willing Region 3 members to serve as **Regional President** for the **2011 – 2012 term**.

If interested, please contact any of the following committee members:

Faith Bange, geraldbange@aol.com
Paulette Miller, psm229@aol.com
Kathryn D'Alessandro, kadales@verizon.net