

Gardening one day at a time

Sikes grows daylilies at Windmill Gardens

By MICHAEL RODGERS
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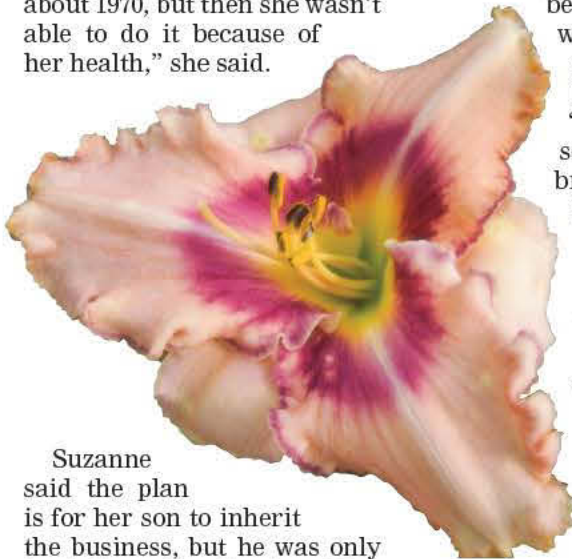
The Sikes family of Luverne has built their business one day at a time, and especially during the months of May and June, those days are bursting with color.

Suzanne Sikes owns Windmill Gardens, a daylily farm located on Highway 10 east of Luverne.

Daylilies are so named because the blooms only last for a day. In fact, even the Latin name for the flower, *Hemerocallis*, comes from the Greek words for "day" and "beautiful."

Sikes has been working with the flowers since 2005.

"My mother-in-law, Sarah Sikes, started the business about 1970, but then she wasn't able to do it because of her health," she said.



Suzanne said the plan is for her son to inherit the business, but he was only in sixth grade at the time. Now he's in college.

"I'm second-generation, and hopefully it'll be third-generation

and on down," she said. Sarah became involved with the daylilies and became a major hybridizer of them, registering about 300 varieties of daylilies.

"People were buying daylilies, and she got one, but she didn't really know what she was getting into," Suzanne said. "She sold a bunch of \$1 and \$2 daylilies to buy her first \$50 daylily, and it died."

"She said she didn't tell her husband until many years later," she added with a laugh.

These days, daylilies can fetch as much as \$300.

Sikes said there are a number of different things a hybridizer is looking for when breeding new types of daylilies.

"You want one that has the stalk out of the foliage

because you don't want a bloom down in the leaves," she said. "You also want several stalks that branch out with buds. Because it only blooms for a day, you want a lot of buds. That way you can have a bunch of blooms over successive days."

While there are no set standards for daylilies, new hybrids can be registered with the American *Hemerocallis* Society.



Breeding a new hybrid is a lengthy process because the flower must be watched over several generations.

"You take two of them and cross-pollinate them, then you save the seeds and plant them," Sikes said.

She said seed pods may have as many as 10 seeds in them or as few as three.

"Each one of those is going to be individual," she said. "It's like children: they might be similar, but they will not be exactly the same. Now, if you divide the mother plant at the root, you'll have the same thing, but pollinating will get you different results."

Sometimes it takes several years to get a bloom from a new hybrid, and the plant must be watched for two or three



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Above: Suzanne Sikes runs Windmill Gardens east of Luverne.

Below: "Togetherness" is the name of a Sikes daylily.

Left: "Designer Magic" is the name of another Sike hybrid.

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