Featured Region 4 Garden-Pat Sayers

By Pat Sayers, Huntington, NY
Photos by Pat Sayers and Chris Petersen

Summer vacations were spent on Grandpa's farm pollinating tomatoes and squash, grafting, rooting cuttings and making seeds. So I suppose farming is in my blood. When I started gardening, it came rather naturally, as did hybridizing.

Whispering Hills is located in the hills of Huntington, on Long Island's north shore. I carved this garden from just over an acre of dense woods using much of the existing naturalized plant material to make garden rooms of dappled shade.. And, since Hurricane Sandy, it has evolved into a sunnier place.

Early in the 80's, a friend brought me a great big clump of hemerocallis citrina from her family garden. It was love at first sight, and that beautiful, pale yellow flowered plant is still a favorite of mine, with its bud count of 50, showing its lovely face in my moon garden at night. As I started to collect daylilies, I collected mostly unnamed "throw aways" and older plants that put a smile on my face just by looking at them. I only kept plants that grew well in my area, bloomed well after my cool nights, and bloomed enough to make a show. After all, I'm a gardener. If it doesn't bloom well, it's out. If the color is muddy, it's out. If it's ugly, it's... oh well, I suppose it depends upon how interesting that plant is. Maybe... especially if it's tall. I do like tall.

Yes, I occasionally did buy expensive plants... and I still have a few of the ones that lived, but there weren't too many of those. It's hard to grow plants here, because the freeze thaw cycle during spring is brutal. The last freeze is May 22, and by that time we've had daytime temperatures up in the 90's. So anything that grows here has to be hardy... very, very hardy.

In 1989 I bloomed my first cross, and within the next few years, became a willing slave to the passion of hybridizing. By 1995, I was lining out 5000 plants every June, and did this every year thru 2001, when health issues forced me to slow down. My time in the garden since is for pleasure. I still dabble, after all there are crosses I just can't not do, but now I use the garden much like an artist uses a canvas. It's where I play with color, shape, form and

Top photo, *H.* 'Wicked White Witch' (Sayers, 2013.

Above, left: 'Whispering Water Nymph' (Sayers, 2007). Photos: Pat Sayers

At Left, a view of the Sayers garden. Photo: Chris Petersen

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movement.

And, I love the moving, swaying, swirling look that happens with the use of tall plants. My style is lush, and overblown, much like a formal garden, gone a bit wild. But, the constant through all is, that no matter what plant I grow, all of my colors are clean clear and bright. And about this I am ruthless.

As mentioned earlier, my garden is a series of rooms. Each different from the next. Some have formal geometric walkways accented with boxwood, as in the Daylily Walk. Others meander and wander through perennial beds. The Rose Garden has a formal brick walkway, built around a circle of daylilies. There's a Fernery overflowing with giant ostrich ferns. And, the hush of the Fairy Circle, edged with stone benches, where it's shady and quiet. The Friendship Garden is home to all the lovely gifts from my special friends.

But, there really isn't much difference between my garden style and my hybridizing program. Just as I learned the fundamentals of gardening, I also did the same with hybridizing, because, to me, hybridizing is a blending of art and science. Without Mendel and my microscope, I would have been lost.

So, I now walk my seedling beds, and if I'm lucky, it's with a friend like Chris Petersen, who prods me to do something with those seedlings, and inspires me to play again... to go back out there, and see what I can coax from all of those little things I've discovered, and how far I can take them again. I suppose my program is wild, like my garden, and without direction... but I really can't wait to see what blooms this summer.

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Opposite page, left, top to bottom: A future Sayers introduction; *H.* 'Onslows Powder Puff Toy' (Sayers, 2013), photos: Pat Sayers ; 'Whispering White Waltz' (Sayers, 2013), photo: Chris Petersen; A future Sayers introduction, photo: Pat Sayers.

Photos this page, clockwise from top left: a clump of 'Isabel Hibbard's Whisper' (Sayers, 2013), photo: Chris Petersen; a Sayers seedling, photo: Pat Sayers; the "Daylily Walk"; a view of the Sayers garden, photos: Chris Petersen.