

Our Daylily Journey On The Family Farm

by Lisa Marlatt

The idea for Ogden Station Daylilies was born in the summer of 2007 when we (Lisa and Jerry Marlatt) visited Fred Sheill of Au Gres, Michigan. At 100 years young, Fred still managed a 10-acre daylily farm by himself, earning him the title of “Daylily King.” Fred persuaded us to buy 400 unnamed seedlings and we still refer to these as ‘Fred’s Section’ of the garden.

We named our business Ogden Station Daylilies because we wanted to keep Ogden Station, Michigan, on the map. When the railroad was built in the 1870s, Ogden Station became a booming community with a ticket office, pharmacy, post office, general store, telephone switchboard, and bank, all located in our renovated Centennial Farm homestead. Ogden Station grew to include a church and a cooperative grain elevator, which was our point of reference for local visitors until it burned down in May 2014. The population of Ogden Station is now a booming 32 people, 3 pet pigs, 4 dogs, 30 chickens, and 5 cats.

During the summer of 2008, we started selling plants at the farmers market in Adrian, Michigan. We also started being open on the farm for visitors to browse the 1.5-acre field and make their selections. It never seemed to fail, however, that everyone came at once or were ready to have their plants dug at the same time. We then switched to taking appointments, so we weren’t rushed and customers didn’t have to wait so long.

When it became obvious to us that this endeavor was more than a hobby, we came up with a business plan. We settled on: 1) keep it small enough for us so that it would be fun, and 2) beat the customers’ expectations, so we give extra fans for their selections. We also ship daylilies for customers who browse the photos at our website.

Jerry started hybridizing daylilies in 2008, as he had previously been hybridizing orchids in our greenhouse. It wasn’t until 2014, when a gentleman approached him at the farmers market and asked him to register one in honor of his wife, that Jerry registered his first daylily, ‘Merry Margarete.’ Since then we have added over 2,000 registered varieties and Jerry has introduced 61 cultivars. Customers are encouraged to select seedlings and help name them in honor of a family member or friend. Jerry grows about 2,000 seedlings per year, starting them indoors under lights.

When Jerry started hybridizing, he experimented with many types. He was intrigued by the teeth and ruffles, moved on to patterns and sculptured, and now has focused more on doubles and increasing branching and bud count. He finds it difficult to pass by a beautiful bloom even if the bud count is low, so I am in charge of digging out seedlings to be composted. As all hybridizers know, it can be a challenge to compost their “babies,” to keep just the best or most unusual



Jerry’s first introduction ‘Merry Margarete’ (2014)
All photos by Lisa or Jerry Marlatt except as noted

blooms with great plant habits. Of course, an unexpected pleasure is going out to the field each morning to see the first blooms of the seedlings.

Ogden Station Daylilies is really a family effort. You will usually see grandchildren out in the field helping us with all aspects of the business. We have 12 grandchildren, and a highlight has been taking each one out into the seedling area and having them pick out the one they want named after them. It's fun to help them select a name for registering. Two of our grandchildren have even hybridized and introduced their own cultivars.



Jerry and Lisa Marlatt
Photo by Charlie Harper



Top to bottom: 'Corona's Wrath' hybridized by grandson Abram Marlatt (2021)

'Perfect In Every Way' hybridized by granddaughter Ella Marlatt (2020)

Unless you have a large garden, you may not realize how much behind-the-scenes work goes into a daylily business. We try to get the fieldwork (planting, digging, hoeing, spraying) done from sunrise until noon, then if there's more to do, and there usually is, we go back out after an early dinner. Jerry says, "I used to work from 9 to 5, but now that I'm retired from being an industrial quality and environmental manager, I work from 5 a.m. to 9 p.m.!" I am a retired school media specialist, so I do the photography, website, and anything that requires organization.

The daylilies are just part of the 35-acre farm that includes the Gleason Brook, which is a tributary of the River Raisin that provides water to cities downstream, such as Dundee and Monroe. Conservation programs by the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service were initiated to slow or prevent soil erosion and runoff from farm chemicals and animal waste into the River Raisin Watershed. We took 10 acres along the brook out of agricultural production and planted 4,000 trees and shrubs along with prairie grass for wildlife habitat, wildflowers for pollinators, nesting boxes for bluebirds and tree swallows, purple martin houses, and milkweed for monarchs. Jerry says, "We have soil on our farm, not dirt. Dirt is what I track into the house. If we take care of our soil, it will take care of us."

Ogden Station Daylilies is also one of the stops on the Lenawee Barn Quilt Trail. In the summer of 2017, Karen Waggoner, a daylily customer, shared with me her dream of creating a local barn quilt trail throughout Lenawee County. That winter, my daughter-in-law Jen

and I each painted three 4x4-foot wooden quilt panels. Starting in 2018, Karen held painting workshops, and the Lenawee Barn Quilt Trail was born, modeled after the Adams County, Ohio, trail started by Donna Sue Groves in 2001. There are now more than 30 locations in or near Lenawee County highlighting the grass roots collaborative effort of artists, quilters, farmers, and barn owners. More information, photos, and a Google map can be found at <http://lenaweebarntrail.org>.

We are a registered Display Garden with the American Daylily Society. In 2021, it was a pleasure to have ADS President Scott Elliott and Region 2 Director Rhonda Veroeven visit the farm, although they had to walk the whole farm barefoot because of heavy rain the day before their visit.

It's been a lot of work, but so much fun. We've met so many interesting gardeners and hybridizers who have shared their expertise. We participate in activities of the three organizations that we attend: the Southern Michigan Daylily Society, the Kalamazoo Area Daylily Society, and the Black Swamp Hosta and Daylily Society. We recently also joined the Ohio Daylily Society because we are only about five miles from the Ohio/Michigan border. We welcome your visit to Ogden Station Daylilies in June through August. Call first to be sure we'll be home.



Above: A few of the 2,000 seedlings planted each year

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Top to bottom: Part of the farm is dedicated to conserving habitat for pollinators

Barn quilt blocks flanking the Ogden Station Daylilies sign
Photo credit: Rhonda Veroeven

Scott Elliott and Rhonda Veroeven
tour the farm barefoot after a rain

Ogden Station Calendar

January: Post new cultivars on website
February: Update all forms and lists, pot up 2,000-3,000 daylily seeds
March: Start the spring field cleanup, hoeing weeds until fall
April: Michigan Dept. of Agriculture inspection
May: Start shipping and digging local orders, iris field days for browsing
June: Early bloomers, hybridize, photos, begin irrigating field as needed until fall
July: Mid season bloomers, hybridize, photos
August: Late bloomers, hybridize, photos, dig iris orders, clump sale, collect seed pods
September: Rebloomers, fall field cleanup, collect more seed pods
October: Finish shipping orders, check quantities for next year's updates
November: Deer hunting for Jerry and quilting for Lisa
December: Gandchildrens' Christmas programs!!!



Top to bottom: 'Neon Triangle' (Marlatt, 2020)

'Judy's Rays Of Sunshine' (Marlatt, 2017)

Boots the cat

Left: The field in full bloom

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Jerry Marlatt's 2021 Introductions



'Doctor Mouli My Mentor'



'Fishing In Paradise'



'Something Weird Appeared'



'Outstanding In The Field'



'Put Your Hands Up'



'Walking The Line'