

Scott Alexander

Mountain View Daylily Farm



Daylily *delight*



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by Gay Liddington

The love of gardening and a neighbourly gesture thirty-eight years ago introduced teacher Scott Alexander to the intriguing world of daylilies. From creating a nursery, surviving the global financial crisis, and supplying thousands of edible buds to a famous restaurateur, Gay Liddington went to hear the story unfold about the "Daylily Man".



Scott Alexander donated two golf carts so incapacitated visitors could enjoy the Maleny Botanic Gardens

Images supplied by Scott Alexander

"**W**E MOVED TO Yarraman, a little town south of Kingaroy. I was creating a cottage garden and a neighbour came over with a couple of plants. She told me I had everything in the garden except daylilies.

"That was the beginning. Slowly the collection built up and I started importing from America," said Scott.

The idea of one day growing daylilies on a larger scale enticed Scott to purchase a block of land in McCarthy Road, Maleny in 1981. A few years later he moved to the area with his stock of around two hundred varieties.

Scott was a remedial resource teacher who travelled to primary schools in the area advising on children with learning difficulties.

"I had an eye problem develop and went into early retirement. And so, by 1986 at the age of forty-five, I was a retired teacher.

"By that time I had started a daylily nursery and was able to carry on with something that I enjoyed. What began as a hobby became my business. I called it Mountain View Daylily Nursery because I had a view of the Glasshouse Mountains."

There were only three other large nurseries in Australia that specialised in daylilies. Scott's nursery became the fourth. He opened on weekends to collectors who shared his love of the exotic flower.

Within two years the flourishing nursery outgrew its one acre. The purchase of land in Policeman Spur Road saw the



Scott Alexander gardening with canine companion BB

Image Gay Liddington



Left: Maleny Debutante



project expand. "It was the most perfect block. The soil was beautiful and the aspect was great!" Scott reminisced.

Scott's vision of creating a landscape garden to showcase daylilies and educate visitors came to fruition with four acres under cultivation. The business focus was on retail, mail order and hybridising.

"Eventually, we got too big and I was disillusioned with having so many visitors...six thousand in a five month period. A lot of them were tourists and not gardeners, so it all changed.

"Then we leased nearby farmland. We sell via the internet and still supply big nurseries but are no longer open to the public."

Travel formed an integral part of Scott's daylily journey with clients in fifteen countries. "We don't export anymore but back then I travelled and got myself known. It wasn't just about daylilies. I loved meeting people!"

The Global Financial Crisis saw the business downsize dramatically. By 2011 sales had plummeted by fifty per cent and five staff members were laid off. Scott remembers it as a heart wrenching time. However, it was a matter of survival.

"It was a big change and a lot of nurseries closed. That's why places like Bunnings came to the fore. Mountain View Daylily Nursery is now the only specialist nursery of its kind in Australia.

"During the past four years we've supplied daylilies to a large propagation nursery for tissue culturing...micro propagation, a natural process done in a laboratory. It's taken a lot of trials to get seven varieties. Another fifteen are being evaluated.

"They create about 50,000 plants all the same. These are sent to nurseries all over Australia. Those nurseries take the little plants, increase them and on sell. My daylilies will be sold through Bunnings by the end of this year.

Left: You will often find Scott at local markets indulging in a new hobby, selling clivia plants with their stunning trumpet flower heads

Asian supermarkets.

"At one stage Peter Gilmore, famous Sydney restaurateur contacted me and asked if I could supply one thousand daylily buds a week. We had three acres under cultivation and provided buds to him for a couple of years."

Scott agrees that gardening is definitely therapeutic. He attributes much of his physical and mental well being to this love.

"After prolonged illness when hope seemed lost, one has to be grateful for improved health. Life is wonderful!"
Mountain View Daylily Nursery – www.daylily.com.au

"Maleny Debutante was my first breeding effort. I selected the name because it was like stepping out. It was registered

in America and we sent plants there for sale.

"Also, Booroobin Magic was quite unique at the time because there was nothing like it in the world. Another I'm really proud of is, In Excess, as I had succeeded in breeding a daylily with an excess of petals and fragrance," said Scott proudly sharing photographs of the prized specimens.

Semi-retirement forced upon him by health challenges has given Scott Alexander time to ponder life. Gone are the years of being consumed with business, branding and public appearances. He is now able to focus on contributing to his community.

Supporting Maleny Golf Club in the development of junior golf and a Glasshouse group, Knitting for the Brisbane Needy, fulfils this endeavour. Sponsor of the Maleny Church of England's St George's Art Awards, Scott also helped Maleny High School raise around \$12,000 towards building their new hall.

"All we did was provide brochures and dig the daylilies. The school then received a percentage of sales. Better than chocolate!" Scott quipped as our conversation turned to food.

The origin of the daylily is in Asia. "I've seen photos of the wild ones in Mongolia...acres of one colour. This wildflower is also a food source.

"Buds, petals and tubers can be used in culinary creations. Pick the buds the day before they are due to open. You can quickly blanch them and fresh petals can be used in salads.

"I often tell people to pick the previous days expired daylily flowers and put them in casseroles and soups. A slight peppery taste in flavour, they are packed with vitamins. Daylily flowers can also be purchased dried from