

After the blooms

The confessions of a shutter bug

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All summer I've been getting out of bed, grabbing my camera and heading out into the garden. During August I watched the numbers of my potential photo subjects dwindle. By early September it was down to one or two per day. There were still some plants with buds to look forward to but it finally happened: The first bloom free day since June had arrived. I stood there, camera in hand and looked out over the sea of green feeling completely lost. I mumbled something about, "Nothing to photograph but pods..." as I turned back into the house without snapping a single shot.



I think it was desperation that brought my camera and I back out into the garden where I "settled" for some pod shots. What a delight to see what I had overlooked, and I would have continued to overlook when blooms take over the spotlight.

'Tis the season... the annual daylily pod harvest and we are



each granted only so many harvest seasons in a lifetime. A pod can't hold a candle to the wonder of the bloom but I have found them to have value beyond their contents. They seem to be as different and as individual as the blooms that gave birth to them. (1)

You've done everything right and the pod has been set. The cross has been recorded and the waiting begins. You monitor the progress, hoping not to see the tell tale signs of an aborted pod. You probably lay eyes on an individual pod several times over the season — but, do you ever really LOOK at it? Fess up — you're just looking for the "I'm ready!" crack to appear. (2)

If you were asked about the differences in pods you could probably list size and shape. In addition to size and shape are the following; texture, definition, color and health. Size is a no brainer. Differences in size happen regardless of diploids or tetraploids.



Some of my largest pods are on diploid scapes.

Shape: Here's where things start to get interesting.



There are the "apples," the "cones," and the "eggs," and maybe others but that's what I found in my garden this fall.

Hemerocallis 'Mexican Sunrise' (Whatley, 1995) is an "apple" podder. Each pod is round and plump looking very much like a Granny Smith apple. (3)

H. 'Lee Reinke' (Reinke-J., 1998) is a "cone" podder. The pods look like a pyramid cedar or a pine cone. (4)

'Firestorm' (Krekler, 1979) is an "egg" podder. They have lovely green eggs that even Dr. Seuss could appreciate. (5)

Definition: There are varying degrees of definition in individual pods. However,

each plant seems to be fairly consistent with its choice of definition.

Here is an example of the tightly defined versus the loosely defined. On the left is 'Simmering Elephants' (Murphy-J.P., 2005) (6) showing a very 'pinched' pod of 3 chambers while on the right is the pod of 'Mexican Sunrise' (7) that is barely creased between the chambers. I call these 'balloon' pods because they look pressurized.

Up next are the "quad" pod and the "pumpkin" pod. My quad pod developed on 'Open Hearth' (Lambert, 1976) (8) after a poly bloom. When you 'catch' a poly bloom, you get an extra chamber on your pod. The pumpkin pod developed on 'Lullaby Baby' (Spalding-W., 1975) (9) after a normal bloom. I only set three pods on this plant and two of them were pumpkins. What about the third pod, you ask?

Ah, the poorly defined. The third pod of 'Lullaby Baby' looks more like a tennis ball or softball than it does a pod. (10) The plant appears to either over-define or poorly define its pods.

Even though it has an overall similar shape to the "balloon" pods the clear definition of the chambers is missing. At the time of this writing the pod is still on the scape. It will be an interesting one to open to see how it is sectioned inside.

Another plant that did poorly (for me) in producing the "perfect" pod is 'Mokan Butterfly' (Lenington-G., 1984). The pistils were bent and/or split all summer. Sometimes with a split pistil you will catch two of the three chambers. Here are the only two pods that are still hanging on the scape at this time. (11) (12)

Texture: There are the obvious smooth and rough textures. If

you take a look back at the 'Simmering Elephants' (6) pod you will see that it is so smooth that it has a sheen or gloss to its exterior skin. At the opposite end of the scale is the "prune" pod. 'Vanilla Fluff' (Joiner, 1988) (13) creates a prune pod every time. And it doesn't seem to matter how much larger the pod gets, the skin stays puckered.

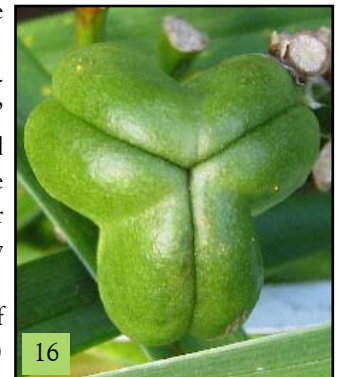
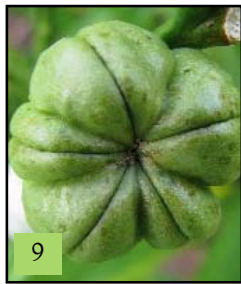
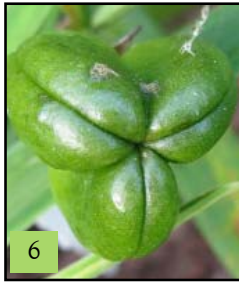
Color: Shades of green run from the very pale to the very dark, and sometimes that gradient will appear on a single pod.

This is a very pale, almost translucent green pod of 'Rainbow Candy' (Stamile, 1996). (14) The same pod viewed from the side in the picture below shows the contrast in color from the scape, emphasizing just how pale this pod is. (15)

In contrast is the rich green of 'Spode' (Munson-R.W., 1984). (16) This pod is the same color as the scape and the foliage.

And finally, the gradient pods of 'Open Hearth'. (17) Almost white at the scape they gradually get greener as they reach the crown.

Then there are the haute couture colors. These are the runway model pods — designer pods. They incorporate bloom and/or bud features into their pods. *H. Citrina* has one of the most "bud-like" pods in my garden. (18) Those that have seen the dark tips on the buds of *Citrina* would recognize the similarity on the pods. (19)



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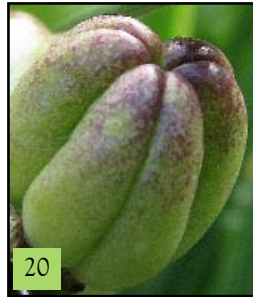
Another interesting property of the pods on *Citrina* is the pronounced crown, similar to the bumps on the “Delicious” apple variety.

Here are two more examples of some speckled and freckled pods. On the left, ‘Startle’ (Belden, 1988) is displaying some splotchy bloom color. (20) On the right is ‘Avante Garde’ (Moldovan, 1986) with dark stippling on the crown. (21)

Health: We all want healthy productive pods full of shiny black seeds. For the most part it is beyond our control. Pods abort. It happens for a variety of reasons. But that is only one problem. On occasion it will only be one chamber that appears to abort. (22) (23) Depending on the age of the pod, there can be hope for the remaining chambers.

If the pod remains sealed, I leave these on the scape, cross my fingers and my toes and blow fairy dust toward the setting sun while balancing on one foot. However, if the deteriorating chamber cracks prematurely I remove the pod and place it into a puddle of water in a Styrofoam egg carton. (24) (25) That prevents insect invasion and the possibility of seed loss.

There will always be surprises if you continue to notice them when they happen. Today I had 4 blooms in the garden, one of which was a last flower open for ‘North Wind Dancer’ (Schaben, 2001) — a personal favorite. I barely glanced over her way because I was going through the pod rows. Look what I



found! (26)

This cross is ‘Mexican Sunrise’ (pod) × ‘Smith Brothers’ (Carr, 1992) (pollen). The pod is seventeen days old. Either there were too many seeds or the size of the seeds was too much for the pod to handle. It can’t be blamed on moisture. We have not had rain in 10+ days and the temperatures have been excellent for September. I have not removed the pod but I suspect its outlook is grim as it is now open to the elements and insects.

Well, I must head back out to the garden. I need to check on those gradient green, prune-puckered, moderately defined, cone pods of ‘Lee Reinke’ and the dark green, smooth and glossy, well defined, egg pods of ‘Simmering Elephants’. ◀

(DISCLAIMER – This is my first daylily pod harvest season. It is also my first year as an AHS member. If all of the above is old news to the seasoned hybridizers then I hope you were able to bear with my enthusiasm.)