

The Thrill of the Find

Subhana Ansari's hybridizing in Northern California

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I was a refugee from Silicon Valley's dot.com bust in 2004 when I took a weekend course in starting a backyard nursery. I grew daylilies from Home Depot at the time, and they bloomed a lot and increased well, and I thought that would be a good plant to grow and sell.

I started visiting local wholesale nurseries and heard about the hybridizer Bill Maryott. I lived fairly near his nursery, so I asked if I could pick up plants I'd bought from him on the Lily Auction. The timing couldn't have been better. He had just lost a helper, and it was time to transplant his entire inventory! In exchange for helping replant his field, he gave me about 2,000 cultivars he wasn't going to replant, and he showed me what he'd learned about operating a business.

He also infected me with the hybridizing bug.

Bill became my mentor, encouraging me to use the best parents I could afford. He said, "crossing mutts to mutts gives you mutts." Year after year, he gave me the priceless gift of candid assessments of my seedling pictures.



'Breath of Compassion' (2009)



'Secret of Secrets' (2012) Michael Bouman photo

— All photos courtesy of the hybridizer unless noted otherwise

I registered my first daylily, 'Breath of Compassion', in 2009, and he thought it was good enough to carry at his nursery. I vividly remember seeing it blooming in a little pot against the fence at my mother's house. I knew it would meet Bill's standards, and it got better as it matured. Bill also carried my 'Secret of Secrets' (2012), which he said is his favorite of my intros. Aside from looking beautiful, it holds its good looks beyond sundown.



Shift in Awareness' (2012)

I knew my path was diverging from Bill's focus on super-round and heavily ruffled. My second introduction was not in that ball park at all. I named it 'Shift in Awareness' (2012). Blue was my first goal in hybridizing, and it was more important to me than form. I have several seedlings — crosses with 'Entwined in the Vine' (Emmerich, 2007) — from Shift in Awareness that are potential introductions: F220A and F220H are currently my favorites. The one that has been the most blue is F220J, and it is also dormant.



Seedling F220J



Seedling F220A



Seedling F220H



'Intimate Moment' (2012) Kirsten Hatfield photo

When I found the first flower of what would later become 'Intimate Moment' (2012), I was so excited that I had one that looked blue. It was the first flower I posted on Facebook. It proved to be good at passing on its blue tones, and I had fun building on its name. It is a parent to 'Pillow Conversation' (2014), 'One Night Pollination' (2014), 'Connected to Love' (2013), and 'Awake Until Dawn' (2016).



'One Night Pollination' (2014) Paul vanMechelen photo



'Awake until Dawn' (2016)

My best blues are 'Eyes of the Beloved' (2012), 'Trust in God' (2013), 'Baraka' (2016), 'Follow Your Bliss' (2015), 'Rumi's Blues' (2012), 'Soul Vision' (2015), 'Rivers of Kisses' (2014), and 'Seeing with the Heart' (2014). My seedling E1233A can be quite blue, as can be H035C, and E355B.



'Eyes of the Beloved' (2012) Kenny Minder photo



'Baraka' (2016) Grace Stamile photo



Seedling E1233A



Seedling H035C



Seedling E355B (with blue jeans)

I cried when I first saw a picture of Patrick Stamile's 'Xylophone Jazz' (Stamile-Pierce, 2011) at a daylily meeting in 2008. It had the colors I loved, and they washed into a starburst pattern and out into a triple edge; it was round and ruffled. In a nutshell, it had everything: color, pattern, and form. That's when my quest for patterns began in earnest. I repeated the cross that was used to make 'Xylophone Jazz' ('Precious Candy' [Stamile, 2006] × 'Bluegrass Music' [Grace-Smith, 2005]), and made hundreds of seeds. 'Hidden Blessings' (2015) is from that cross as is D179K; and from 'Hidden Blessings,' G123C, a probable future.



'Xylophone Jazz' (Stamile-Pierce 2011) Pat Stamile photo



'Hidden Blessings' (2015)



Seedling D179K



Seedling G123C Brent Hadley photo



'Solomon's Sunrise' (2015, introduced 2017)

In peak bloom, I often spend more time inside the greenhouse than walking the fields, but when I walk the fields, there is the thrill of the find. The first time I saw what would become 'Solomon's Sunrise' (2015), I was flabbergasted. The pattern was huge and complex! I sent it to a friend in Ohio to test, and garden visitors who saw it commented excitedly. Best of all, its hardy and the pattern seems consistent in heat. 'Solomon's Sunrise' grew out of advice from Bill Maryott who suggested Dan Hansen's 'Tully Mars' (2007) for pattern breeding. 'Tully Mars' has been one of my best parents. 'Solomon's Sunrise' is Tully Mars x 'Victorian Garden Heavens Applause' (Brooker-G., 2006). 'Delicious Complexity' (2016) is its sibling, from the same pod.



'Delicious Complexity' (2016)



'Infinitely Interrelated' (2015)

'Infinitely Interrelated' (2015) is from the reverse cross. Other crosses using 'Tully Mars' were also exciting finds. 'Do What You Love' (2016) is a cross with my 'River of Kisses' (2014). 'Open Your Mind' (2016) is with 'Zoe Allegra' (Petit, 2008). 'Divine Laughter' (2015) is with 'Gerda Brooker' (Morss, 1995). Many of my favorite seedlings have 'Tully Mars' as a parent: G160B, G160C, (those two are possible futures), E462B, E296J, F242K, and G068F.



'Do What You Love' (2016)



Seedling G160B (possible future)



Seedling G160C (probable future)



Seedling E462B (being tested)



Seedling E296J



Seedling F242K



Seedling G068F



Gerda Brooker's 'Victorian Garden Heaven's Applause' (the other parent of 'Solomon's Sunrise') has been another great foundation plant for pattern breeding. 'General Perplexity' (2015) is from it with Tet 'Out of the Blue' (Salter-E.H., 2002). I was so excited the first day it bloomed, I pulled our kind Brazilian plumber into the greenhouse to see it because I had to show somebody! Two other favorite seedlings from 'Victorian Garden Heavens Applause' are seedlings G143A and G115E.



Seedling G143A

'General Perplexity' (2015) Claudia Conway photo



Seedling G115E

A cross of two blue parents yielded some blue and a surprise pattern! 'Cosmic Odyssey' (Stamile, 2007) crossed with 'Blue Beat' (Stamile, 2008) could have produced just a nice blue. 'Unexpected Grace' (2015) is so much more.

I want to breed plants that break the bonds of local climate conditions, and I have come to realize that the moderate climate I know in California results in different color values and pattern definition than some of my friends

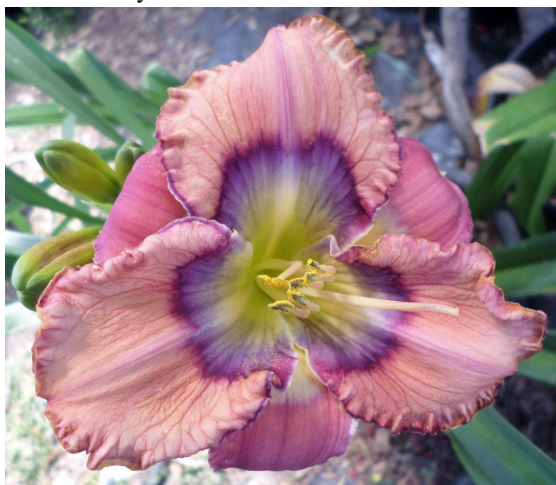


Unexpected Grace (2015)

see in other zones. Here next to San Francisco Bay, we have night time winter temps down to 20 degrees F, and we hardly ever have snow. In the summer or fall, it's rare to have more than three days in a row over 90 degrees F before the fog comes in. Naturally, I select what looks promising here, but I also want to know how possible futures grow in places with cycles of freezing and thawing, single-digit winter nights, and real heat waves. For the past five years, I have had seedlings on trial with Michael Bouman, near St. Louis, and with other gardeners in Canada, Maine, Ohio, New Hampshire, and elsewhere.

Beyond my goals of hardiness and consistency in pattern, I care about petals that don't "canoe" too much, flowers that open flat, and patterns that are larger, more complex, with more colors. Having a wider edge on patterned flowers would be

nice, and of course, good bud count and branching are a must. However, I am primarily interested in a pattern that is unique, that holds my attention.



Seeing with the Heart (2014)

In December 2013, my husband had a catastrophic stroke that left his left side paralyzed. He was a musician, and it ended his musical career. He used to help in the garden, but since his stroke, he needs help with everything. I care for daylilies during the day, for him primarily at night, and squeeze in a nap some times.



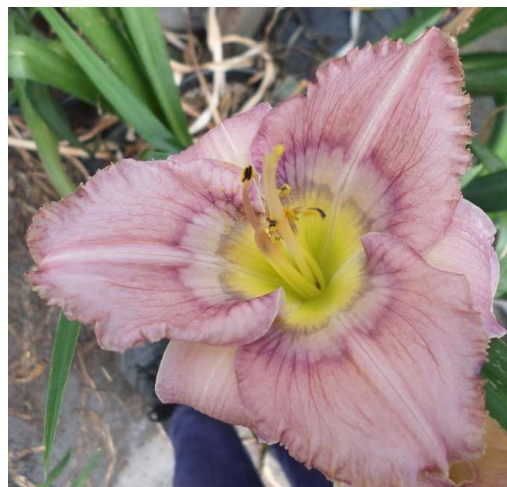
The Presence (2012)

We have thousands of daylilies in 3 gallon pots, and he used to water by hand. Three years later I have them all on drip irrigation. I didn't get seeds planted for two years, but last year's seeds are all planted. My website, flourishingdaylilies.com, could use updating.



Trust in God (2013) Michael Bouman photo

He still has his sense of humor, and comes up with names for the daylilies. When I asked for a name for the parent of 'Trust in God' (2013), in a flash he suggested 'Tie Your Camel First' (2014). He can show more love in his eyes than anyone I know. 'Seeing with the Heart' is for him. His name is Huzur, which translates to "The Presence" named for him (2012).



Tie Your Camel First (2014)

A small section of my seedling field brought back a fond memory of a visit to Luddy and Rachel Lambertson's Art Gallery Gardens in Florida in 2009. I had hoped that my garden would look like theirs someday: masses of crazy-beautiful flamboyant blue-toned flowers. From that seedling bed, I selected 'Solomon's Sunrise' and 'Delicious Complexity', 'Do What You Love, eight probable futures, and 15 others worth watching. In the past, it was great to have one possible future from a bed. We have half an acre, and I needed to clear my 'magic bed' to have room for this year's seedlings, which was another challenge. It's like climbing a mountain to get the view from the top. We are so grateful for God's blessings, trying to appreciate the hidden ones, we do appreciate all the support and encouragement from our friends. I look forward to the next thrilling find and its beauty that feeds my soul.