

The Most Beautiful Polish Daylilies

Text and photos by **Madis Nurms**
Berlin, Germany

On July 10, at the Wojsławice Arboretum in Poland, the 16th meeting of Polish daylily aficionados, aptly called HEMEROMania 2022 took place. I had the honour of serving as one of the judges for the competition called The Most Beautiful Daylily Bloom of Polish Hybridising.



The event was organised and took place in the arboretum, located in southwestern Poland. This arboretum stands out for its enormous diversity of ornamental plants, especially its collections of rhododendrons, daylilies, boxwood, and peonies. As it is accustomed to Polish public gardens, it is very well maintained and a true paradise for any daylily enthusiast - their collection, with more than 3750 varieties, is one of the biggest in Europe. Special attention has been paid to displaying daylily species and their natural clones, of which there are as many as 20 in the garden. Special areas are dedicated to miniature varieties, spiders and unusual flower shapes, Stout Medal winners, fragrant varieties, etc. The selection of the best cultivars by both Polish and German hybridizers can also be enjoyed. By the way, a gradually expanding list of all daylily varieties grown at Wojsławice can be found on the Arboretum's website. However, the emphasis here is not on acquiring the freshest introductions but rather on varieties that have already proven to be of great garden value and planting vast areas of them. The Arboretum's huge dimensions provide a good opportunity for this - the long daylily beds meander to the horizon.

In fact, it is better to plan several consecutive days for the visit because similar to some immense art museums, you need time to fully appreciate the huge variety of beautiful masterpieces. The best time to visit, of course, the annual meeting of daylily lovers called HEMEROMania, a festival dedicated to this multifaceted perennial. The central event of the meeting is the aforementioned competition for the prettiest blooms. This year, the awards were given in two categories: audience selection and jury selection. The competition's aim is to celebrate the most beautiful bloom of Polish origin. Since the emphasis is solely on the beauty of a single bloom, not other plant traits, seedlings that are mostly not registered cultivars competed for the gold medal.

The audience was able to vote both on Facebook and on the website of the arboretum, and a total of 6055 votes were cast. From their voting, a pink-eyed polymerous seedling, 'Poziomkowa Pralinka' (below left) by Honorata Kubiczek and Leopold Kurek, emerged as the winner. Not far behind was their other selection, a hot pink bloom, lined with a golden edge, called 'Niebiańska Sotnia' (below right). The first gathered 530 virtual votes, and the other 527.



One of the hybridizers that won the hearts of the jury as well as the audience was Tadeusz Kotula from Rybnik in southern Poland. Kotula is known for his very ruffled introductions, among them such opulent beauties as 'Maravilla Golden Crown' (2019) or 'Leonopteryx Rex' (2019). By the public vote in Facebook it was obvious from early on that one of his seedlings would be a shoo-in to win. He had entered a few stunning blooms to the competition, among them two gorgeous near-black seedlings with long ivory fringes. One of those, seedling 20-157F (below left) got the highest number of votes from the jury and placed 4th with the audience. Are we ever going to see this remarkable seedling as an introduction is not clear yet, since Kotula himself considers 20-157F to be in its adolescence still. It was sown in 2020: "It means that it is too early to say what will be its garden requisites." The seedling comes from the cross of hybridiser's own seedling 18-150 (which has 'Atropocosmicus' (Kotula, 2018)) in its build-up, alongside with 'Gnashing of Teeth' (Emmerich, 2010). Kotula's most unique entry was probably seedling no. 20-48C (below right). This rusty-coloured bitone was adorned with long tentacles framing its petals as well as shorter teeth on the sepals. This edgy creation was certainly something unexpected from the hybridizer popular for his voluptuous forms and sultry colour palette.



There were other breathtakingly beautiful entries too. Robert Bańcerowski from the outskirts of Krakow presented an amazing seedling simply called "e" (2020) in blushing cream, overcast in lime, and edged in chartreuse (left photo). This verdant beauty came in second when the jury's votes were summarised. He also showed some curiously rainbow-patterned seedlings, of which 'A' and 'B' were my favourites because of their distinctive looks. This owner of a mechanical workshop, by the way, became passionate about hybridising daylilies when visiting Wojsławice during the earlier daylily festivities. He says: "I always listened with curiosity and admiration to the lectures and presentations on the achievements of our domestic breeders there." Judging by his seedlings, I would say that he himself is now well on his way to becoming one of the most interesting Polish hybridisers. Hopefully, he will register some of his intriguing creations soon.

Seedlings A and B by Robert Bańcerowski



It was a pleasure to see that the modern Polish hybridisers take full advantage of the genetic potential of the daylily - every participant had their own unique style and many different approaches could be seen. Elżbieta Popczyk (lower right) and Tadeusz Kosmus presented a number of round and ruffled seedlings in delicate pinks and yellows. Kosmus, whose jagged bitone variety 'Anna Solidarnosc' (Kosmus, 2019) can be admired in the Spring 2022 AHS Daylily Journal, also displayed a promising seedling no. 231-20-2 (lower left). Its crispate petals had a certain pinwheel movement to them, combined with 'Angel Wings' ruffling on the edge, at times revealing the back of the petal.



Jerzy Byczyński entered a number of nostalgic-eyed and watermarked cultivars, reminiscent of historical daylilies, whereas Barbara Kosierb had very promising unusual forms and patterned seedlings that were sadly not presented to their full potential due to the poor quality of entry photos. In my book, at least, her near-white UF bloom would have deserved a much higher place. Jaromir Lechowicz displayed a clear personal style with seedlings reminiscent of superstar-cultivar 'Arno's Bow Tie' (Korth-P.-Korth-L., 2011), with their wide-open form and mulberry band around the extended green throat.



H. 'Fordon' from Jerzy Byczyński



Seedling 113-2, 2019 from Jaromir Lechowicz

My irrefutable favourite of the whole competition was nevertheless an unique spotted seedling 19-176C by Adam Ślusarczyk from Śliwice, a charming village in northern Poland. In addition to the scarlet eye with lovely veins, this extraordinary seedling has rich garnet spots on its petals that vary in both colour and shape, ranging from rectangular with very clear smooth edges to elongated elliptical with feathered edges (lower left). Around these patches, rusty background colour seems to form a light-hued network. In addition, it's also a bicolor, with mahogany sepals. To me, the pattern is somehow reminiscent of the heavily pigmented skin of a giraffe. Ślusarczyk says that he worked for a few years with his seedlings to obtain a colour close to bronze - and has had some success with this particular seedling. It stems from a cross of 'Symeon' (Franczak, 1982) and 'Lavada Kemp' (Hensley-D., 2007). A chestnut-coloured daylily with such an uncommon patterning would be a treat for any gardener with a taste for something peculiar. Ślusarczyk also presented a seedling 'MO Serce Na Dłoni' (lower right), which judging by the photo, does not stay far behind the breath-taking beauty of Karol Emmerich's world-famous creations.



I have said it before, that I have a strong inkling that Poland seems to be moving to the forefront of European daylily hybridising at the moment. Events like this certainly help to popularise the genus in Poland as well as Europe in general, and I hope that in the future, more and more talented hybridisers will put their creations to the test in this competition. Deputy Director of the Botanical Garden of the University of Wrocław for the Wojsławice Arboretum, Tomasz Dymny, together with the caretaker of the daylily collection, Małgorzata Gębala, were responsible for organising the whole event and the spirited awarding ceremony. The medals were distributed to the winners and the air was filled with *nuevo tango* melodies from Astor Piazzolla's compositions performed by violin, accordion, bass, guitar and piano.



Of course, the festival did not end with the competition. The organisers had put a lot of effort into giving stimulation to all the senses of the visitors and came up with several daylily-themed activities. The participants of the meeting could take part in a field game and learn about the most important groups of daylilies that can be seen at the Arboretum Wojsławice. There was also a guided walk and a presentation of the National Collection of Daylilies. The Arboretum was decorated with daylily blooms (see below photos) set in beautiful compositions prepared by Józefa Gębala, Anna Rybotycka, Barbara Dobrzycka-Baścik and Agnieszka Sobków. The gallery where the award ceremony took place was filled with magnificent silk paintings by Dorota Piątkowska. It was also possible to take part in a floristics show led by **Jolanta Supel**, as well as make a bouquet or a wreath on your own during the workshop. The whole meeting culminated with a bustling plant fair where daylilies also reigned supreme. Overall, **HEMERomania 2022** was truly a mania in the best sense of the word, and I hope that some British plant enthusiasts will find it in their hearts to leave their garden for a few days next summer, cross the English Channel and partake in the Polish festival to celebrate our favourite perennial.



Above: Some of the award-winning hybridisers and right, the daylily at their peak at Wojsławice Arboretum

Madis Nurms is an internationally acknowledged Estonian theatre designer living in Berlin, Germany. In 2021, the book "Päevaliilia" (The Daylily), written by him, was published in Estonian. The aim of the book is to present newer daylilies that do well in the North-European climate but also to grip the reader by telling the stories behind the selected cultivars. In most cases, there are wonderful backstories to daylilies - interesting facts about the way they came to be, their parentage, or how they got their names. The hefty book has 820 named cultivars, focuses on less-known European cultivars, and has numerous illustrations and photos. Nurms, a passionate daylily lover, is also a member of the BHHS and American Hemerocallis Society registration committee.
www.madisnurms.com

HEMERomania 2022
Wojsławice Arboretum, Poland
A well-attended event with very high standard includes superb flower displays and silk paintings (above photos)



Madis Nurms