

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



**Namesake daylily blossoms
at Betty Ford Alpine Gardens**

VAIL, Colo. (Aug. 8, 2007) — A unique, magnificent flower inspired by first lady Betty Ford is abloom at America's highest botanical garden.

For the first time since it was planted, Hemerocallis Betty Ford, or the Betty Ford Daylily, is offering peeks at its exquisite petals to visitors of Betty Ford Alpine Gardens, in Vail's Ford Park.

"It's a stunning flower," says Nicola Ripley, director of horticulture, who's cared for the Betty Ford Daylily since introducing it to the Gardens five years ago. "It's certainly taking its time. Daylilies tend to bloom one bud at a time. The whole plant doesn't pop up at once; it should be blooming for two to three weeks."

The Betty Ford Daylily, now on display in the Gardens' Entry Perennial Border, just inside the main gate, is a hybrid flower created especially to honor Mrs. Ford in 1974, when her successful battle with breast cancer provided inspiration to women with the potentially fatal disease across the country and throughout the world.

One of those women was Mary Helen Kirchhoff in Sanford, Fla., whose son, David, created the Betty Ford Daylily in the first lady's honor, and since has made a career of hybridizing daylilies. At the time, he says, the criteria were very specific.

"Mrs. Ford wanted a red flower, and we chose five unnamed seedlings," says David Kirchhoff, who helped monitor the flower's performance at the Gardens over two winters. "The chosen hybrid had to grow in Vail, high in the Rocky Mountains. To have a daylily that does that, reaching across such extreme conditions of heat and cold, long days and short days, is indicative of the qualities of Mrs. Ford.

"At a time when Southern women, like my mother, were too shy to admit they had breast cancer, Mrs. Ford was out there, openly, going through it herself," Kirchhoff adds. "She was a beacon of light to women, and she helped my mother, who ultimately lost her battle four years later."

The Betty Ford Daylily blooms in unique shades of shimmering garnet to cardinal with a blue-red overlay, red veins coursing through the flower, colors intensifying above a clear apricot red, watermark halo and yellow to citron green throat, says Kirchhoff, a member

of the executive committee of the American Hemerocallis Society and partner in Daylily World, based in Lawrenceburg, Ky. “Blooms are as large as 6 inches in diameter; stems are up to 30 inches tall.

“Of all the daylilies, it is one of the most exquisite,” adds Kirchhoff. “It's a thrill to learn that H. 'Betty Ford' is established and blooming in the Betty Ford Alpine Gardens. Hopefully, now that the plant is established, it will bloom every year.”

With the vision of being recognized as the foremost authority on high-altitude plants in natural and cultivated landscapes in the Rocky Mountains region and similar environments, the Betty Ford Alpine Gardens, at 8,250 feet above sea level, is the highest botanical garden in the United States, and perhaps the world, providing free access to an estimated 100,000 visitors annually. The organization plays an important role in encouraging summertime flower displays throughout the Vail Valley at both private homes and businesses and is active in displaying and working for the conservation of high-altitude plants.

The Betty Ford Alpine Gardens is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization for which operations and programs are funded entirely through the generosity of donors. For more information, call 970-476-0103 or visit www.bettyfordalpinegardens.org.

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Hemerocallis Betty Ford, the Betty Ford Daylily, is offering peeks at its exquisite blooms to visitors of Betty Ford Alpine Gardens, in Vail's Ford Park. The hybrid flower was created in 1974 in honor of first lady Betty Ford, who inspired women throughout the world in her successful battle with breast cancer.

photo credit: Courtesy Daylily World