
NCDS Newsletter



January 1998

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Why Do the Newsletters Come So Irregularly?

There is no set publishing schedule; the newsletters get done when there's something to say and there's time to produce them. So there are no newsletters during the show season and in early summer when its time to dig up daffodils. The annual fall raffle and auction in October is a major event warranting two notices. The result is usually an August and a September newsletter. Now, before the show season arrives, we send a newsletter to publicize the upcoming events. There will be one more newsletter next month with information that wasn't ready in time for this newsletter. After that, it's time to grow and show daffodils, not just talk about them!

Northwest Bulb Growers Association Conference

NCDS member Kirby Fong attended the Northwest Bulb Growers Association conference in Seattle December 2 and 3. The association consists of commercial bulb growers primarily in Washington state. They grow irises, tulips, and daffodils on a large scale, primarily to sell the flowers rather than the bulbs. The 1997 conference had more emphasis on daffodils than in recent years. We'll share here just a few tidbits from the conference.

England grows more daffodils than any other country, significantly more than Holland. The daffodils you find in garden centers are more likely to have been imported from England than Holland. Their biggest crops are Carlton and Golden Harvest which they readily admit are prone to basal rot. If you keep losing Carlton and Golden Harvest, it's because you don't (or can't) take the special measures the commercial growers do to keep the bulbs alive. The English commercial growers (not specialists like Clive Postles and John Pearson) have enough problems fighting basal rot that they can't afford to look for and discard virused bulbs. Let that be a warning to you when you buy bulk daffodil bulbs! They are trying to hybridize cultivars that are basal rot resistant, but Carlton and Golden Harvest will continue to be the major crops for the near future.

As Benlate and formalin (formaldehyde) become unavailable as fungicides for dipping bulbs, every one will need to find a replacement. Washington State University's research and experiment centers have done much work to help the local bulb industry, including studying the effectiveness of various fungicides. Chlorine dioxide looks like a promising replacement for formalin, but only the commercial growers may be able to afford it. Daffodil gardeners will probably have to resort to Daconil or household bleach. Neither is quite as good as formalin, but at least they will be available. Bleach has to be used in high concentration and rapidly loses its effectiveness as more bits of organic matter accumulate in the dip. For those of you who are interested in daffodils for landscaping rather than showing, don't worry about fungicide treatments. Just keep trying different varieties and let Darwinian selection take its course. The surviving varieties are the ones that can resist the diseases in your garden and are the ones you should buy in the future.

Research on tulips shows it's a good thing to add nitrogen in January. The next best thing is to use slow release nitrogen in the fall. The goal is to get nitrogen into the root zone when the tulips start making rapid growth in the spring. There was no claim that the conclusion applies to daffodils, but it does suggest that what little nitrogen daffodils need should also be applied in January. So after you read this newsletter, go out and scatter a low nitrogen fertilizer over your daffodil beds. Low means 4 or 5 %.

NCDS on Line

Thanks to Nancy Tackett, NCDS now has a Web site. Aim your browser at <http://www.daffodil.org/> Surprisingly, no one else had registered the name "daffodil," but "NCDS" was already taken! Constructive suggestions and contributions to the Web site would be welcome.

Daffodil Mail Relay

For those of you new to the Internet, we repeat an earlier announcement. Former American Daffodil Society president Ted Snazelle who teaches at Mississippi College persuaded the college to donate the use of its list server to support a daffodil mailing list. To get on the mailing list, send the one line message "subscribe daffodil" (without the quotes) to address listserv@mc.edu. The header or subject field of the message can be blank; put these two words in the body of the message. After these two words, put a space and then your real name. To send a message to people on the mailing list, send your message to daffodil@mc.edu. The list server will send copies to everyone on the daffodil mailing list. When you subscribe, the list server uses your return address as the place to which to send mail. Although the list server does not use your real name, it is helpful in identifying who the subscribers actually are.

Daffodil Display at Kautz Ironstone Vineyard

Kautz Ironstone Vineyard at 1894 Six Mile Road, Murphys, CA 95247 is holding "A Spring Symphony" — a spring festival of art, music, wine, food, and daffodils February 28 - March 1. This is going to be an annual event destined to get bigger and better every year. KIV has planted over nine tons of daffodil bulbs in their landscape and, with advice from Bob Spotts, is also putting in beds of exhibition daffodils. They put in 150 exhibition cultivars this fall. This effort will recur annually, building up KIV as one of premier sites to view both landscape and exhibition daffodils. NCDS' role is to set up a display of exhibition daffodils and be available to answer questions for the public. There are two ways you can help. One is to take flowers up to KIV for display, and the other is to spend a few hours at the display to answer questions about daffodils (and maybe recruit some new members for NCDS). If you can help, contact Bob Spotts at (510) 625-5526. Even if you can't go, you might be able to donate some cut flowers for someone else to take there. As the subtitle implies, there's a lot more than daffodils going on that weekend. There's art, food, wine, and music too. To find out more about this event, contact Chris Gomez at KIV (209) 728-1251. Her e-mail address is chrisg@goldrush.com. She'll be happy to assist you if you're looking for a bed and breakfast place to stay or are interested in attending the Saturday evening awards dinner.

First Show of the Season at Sutter Creek, March 7

For the third consecutive year NCDS starts its show season at Gallery 10, 15 Eureka Street in Sutter Creek. The show itself will be 10 AM to 5 PM on Saturday, March 7. If you can, come at 4 PM Friday to help set up. Bring daffodils to enter Friday evening or early Saturday morning. It would help if you could come at 5 PM Saturday to take down the show. The Gold Quartz Inn where we previously stayed has turned into a retirement home. This year we will stay at Aparicio's Hotel, 271 Hanford Street in Sutter Creek. This is the main road going north from Sutter Creek. The hotel is only a half mile from the center of town, so it's actually closer to the show than the Gold Quartz Inn. Their phone number is (209) 267-9177. The rate they are offering us is \$70 per night, taxes included. Details of the Saturday night dinner are unavailable right now. We hope to have information in the February newsletter.

The Livermore Show, March 14-15

The NCDS principal show will once again be in Livermore at Alden Lane Nursery. As usual, we can use any volunteers to help set up the tables and fill the test tubes late Friday afternoon. Exhibitors can stage daffodils Friday night and Saturday morning. Dress warmly if you're coming Friday night; the staging area is outdoors. The show will be in the greenhouse and will be open to the public from 1 PM to 5 PM Saturday and 10 AM to 4 PM Sunday. As expected, we can use your help to empty test tubes and put things away Sunday when the show closes. Alden Lane Nursery is on the southwest corner of the intersection of Alden Lane with Holmes Street on the south side of Livermore. On Saturday morning, please park at the west end of the parking lot near the truck entrance so that the public can use the spaces at the east end closer to the store and greenhouse. Hotel information for out of town visitors is not available right now. We'll try to get that information for the February newsletter.

Intermediate Ribbon

This is a rerun from a previous newsletter to remind you that The American Daffodil Society has just approved a new ribbon which local daffodil shows can award beginning in 1998. It is a ribbon for the best intermediate daffodil in the show. An intermediate is a cultivar in divisions 1, 2, 3, 4, 11, or 12 with a single floret whose typical diameter is one and a half to three inches. NCDS will offer this ribbon, so now your smallish flowers have a chance to win the recognition they deserve. There are beautiful daffodils which happen to be small but not small enough to be miniature, and this award assures that they will not be neglected

Historic Ribbon

While we're at it, NCDS will continue to offer the ADS historic ribbon (initiated in 1997) for best cultivar in the historic section. Some of the oldies are great garden flowers, that's why they're still around, but they wouldn't otherwise be considered great exhibition cultivars. Now your pre-1940 cultivars have a chance to be seen and to win something. The curious aspect of the Historic ribbon is that it can be awarded to either a standard or a miniature daffodil. So don't overlook bringing your best bloom of W. P. Milner!

The 1998 NCDS Annual Meeting

The annual meeting and dinner will again be at Cattlemen's Restaurant, 2882 Kitty Hawk Road in Livermore. It will be Saturday night, March 14. Time, prices, and entree selections are not yet available; we'll tell you in the February newsletter. At the meeting we will be electing officers for biennial terms. There is one bylaws change on the agenda at this time. When we updated the bylaws at the 1997 annual meeting, we overlooked the bylaw that says membership runs from January 1 through December 31. As you know, people join NCDS at various times in the year. With modern data bases, it's no problem keeping track of when people joined, and, in fact, you can see the expiration month on your mailing label. We have already asked people to renew membership on the anniversaries of their joining rather than everyone in January. To make the bylaws agree with the practice, we are asking the membership to approve a change from

Dues for active membership shall be eight dollars (\$8.00) per person or ten dollars (\$10.00) per family, per calendar year, payable in the first quarter of the year, to become delinquent on April 1 of the current year. Any member in arrears with dues shall be dropped from the membership rolls after proper notification by the Treasurer. Any member joining after October 1 becomes an active member for the following calendar year.

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Since the Secretary rather than the Treasurer actually handles the membership records, we've said Secretary in the proposed change.

Alameda County Home and Garden Show

The NCDS under the skilled management of Wayne Steele once again plans to operate a booth at the Alameda County Home and Garden show at the county fairgrounds in Pleasanton February 6-8, 1998. If you are able to spend 2 to 3 hours at the booth to answer questions for the public, please contact Wayne Steele at (510) 447-5261. Friday morning February 6 is set up time. The show is open to the public at one o'clock. For volunteering, you will receive free admission and an extra free ticket for a friend to attend the Home and Garden Show and, last but not least, your choice of a potted blooming daffodil. If all goes well, we should have pots of My Word, Erlicheer, Johann Strauss, Pasteline, Monal, Shadow Mist, Rose Amber, and several of Sid DuBose's and Ben Hager's early seedlings in full bloom plus a few miniatures.

Christine Kemp

We regret to report that long time NCDS member Christine Kemp of Fortuna died on New Year's day after suffering a series of strokes beginning last September. Christine was a walking encyclopedia of gardening and a rose, fuchsia, and design judge as well as a daffodil judge. Christine was very active right up to her first stroke. She celebrated her 90th birthday in September 1996 while on the daffodil tour in Australia and had planned to go on the daffodil tour to England and Northern Ireland in 1998. Those of us who knew her were amazed at how she could pack enough for a three week trip in a single carry on bag while the rest of us were lugging around heavy suitcases. We will miss her lively charm as well as the flowers she grew.

What Is a Daffodil Show?

We write this newsletter presuming that all members know and care about daffodil shows, but since this may not be true, it's good to go back to basics once in a while. There are approximately 40 local daffodil shows and one national show in the U.S. each year. A show, unlike a display such the one we're doing at KIV, is a competition that follows guidelines laid out by the American Daffodil Society. The rules and scoring system propagated by the ADS favor the most beautiful and flawless daffodils. Other attributes like resistance to

diseases and adverse weather are not considered even though they would be important for landscaping. A garden daffodil should also be tall enough to hold the flower above the foliage and be a vigorous grower. In the ideal scheme of things, the cultivars (hybrids) that are found to be most beautiful should be garden tested for the other desired attributes, and the most virtuous should then be mass propagated so that all gardeners can afford them. Alas, the lead time and expense of developing new daffodils for bulk commerce is so great that few of them make it into mass production. You will see many daffodils at a show that will never be widely available. If you see something you'd like, you'll probably have to do the garden trial yourself and see if you can get one bulb to increase to dozens over a period of several years.

Those of you who have seen a show may recall that there are typically one to two hundred classes in which you can compete. The bulk of the classes are for entries consisting of a single stem or three stems of the same cultivar. Since the most prestigious awards are for collections of daffodils, you'll typically see the better flowers among the collections of five, twelve, fifteen, or twenty-four daffodils. Now, it's obvious for a strict beauty contest that you need only single stem classes, not collection classes. The collection classes serve at least two additional purposes. One is to make some point such as emphasizing the range of divisions, or focusing attention upon advances in, for example, pink cupped daffodils, white daffodils, jonquils, etc. Another is to give large growers some classes that use up a large number of flowers so that small growers can have a better chance to win the single stem classes.

When you visit a daffodil show and see all the blue, red, yellow, and white ribbons, you should understand that first, second, third, and honorable mention are being awarded in numerous classes. The plethora of single and three stem classes assures that only very similar forms and colors of daffodils are made to compete against each other.

Why Should You Enter a Daffodil Show?

Many NCDS members are content to help with a show and admire the entries. And that's fine because we need people to help. But a daffodil show also needs daffodils. If you're going to have a show with 600 daffodils, it's healthier to the society to have 30 people enter 20 each than six people bring 40 to 200 each. That way we don't become dependent on one or two people to bring the bulk of the flowers nor is the show endangered if a major grower is unable to attend the show.

Of course, keeping the show well supplied with flowers is not the most compelling reason. You should enter your daffodils because it's fun! For a voluntary activity, that's the only viable reason. It's fun to share beautiful flowers with others. We can't all visit your garden, so bring your best daffodils to the show for others to see. And unlike sharing food or money where you give up something you have for the satisfaction of helping others, you don't give up any pleasure when you also share the beauty of your flowers. It's fun because you get to meet and talk with other people who share a similar interest. It's fun because daffodils are more receptive to being cleaned and groomed than your children or pets. It's fun because there are enough entry classes that anyone, even with a modest number of entries, can win some ribbons and recognition.

How to Start Exhibiting Daffodils

The process of entering daffodils in a show is actually simple, but it can seem intimidating if you merely show up Saturday morning with your first fistful of daffodils and see experienced exhibitors with dozens of flowers and test tubes covering their staging benches. No, the right way to start is to listen to an expert explain and demonstrate how to stage daffodils a week or so before the show. That way you and the instructor can be relaxed without the excitement/confusion of an imminent show. NCDS just happens to have an expert instructor in Jan Moyers. At the publication time of this newsletter, we didn't know where and when Jan's teaching session will be, but rather than wait for the February newsletter, we suggest you phone her at (415) 453-5261. She'll appreciate knowing who's interested so she can be better prepared. She will teach you about selecting daffodils to enter and how to clean, groom, and stage them. Jan is an accredited daffodil judge and will therefore be able to explain what the judges are looking for. If you are afraid you can't tell a good daffodil from a mediocre one, then fear no more. Every novice exhibitor has wondered how to evaluate daffodils in order to decide which were the best ones to enter. Now you too can learn what the judges are looking for. As if that weren't enough, Jan will also be available Saturday morning of the show to help new exhibitors. If the big exhibitors have monopolized the staging space, Jan will push them out of the way and help you round up the test tubes and wedging material. And yes, she'll help you stage your flowers if you still feel uncertain how to proceed.

Strategies for Small Growers

A small grower is a person who grows fewer than 100 different daffodil cultivars, maybe a lot fewer than 100. If you are just starting in the daffodil business, you're probably a small grower as most people do not buy 100

different cultivars their first year. If your garden is small or if you insist on growing something besides daffodils in your garden, you may never have more than 100 different daffodil cultivars. Is it then hopeless to win a major ADS award because you'll never be able to stage a big collection or because you'll never have as many high quality flowers as the exhibitor who grows 500 cultivars? Not at all!

The basic idea is to find a niche that you like and exploit it. With a limited number of daffodils, your odds of winning best in show, though not zero, are small; however, you can concentrate on growing a large number each of a few historic cultivars to improve your chances of winning the Historic ribbon. You may also have noticed that we don't have nearly as many three stem entries as single stem entries. Therefore if you grow a couple dozen bulbs each of a few exhibition cultivars, you can improve your chances of winning the White ribbon for best vase of three standards. The same reasoning applies to the Miniature White ribbon which is probably the least competitive of the miniature awards.

Speaking of light competition, the container grown classes usually draw few entries. There are ADS ribbons for standard cultivars, miniature cultivars, and species. Our winters are mild enough that you can grow pots of daffodils outside; you don't need a greenhouse. Container grown daffodils could be a viable possibility for those of you who don't have much space in the ground for growing daffodils. The ADS awards for container grown daffodils originated as an award for species grown and shown in pots. That in turn was a consequence of wanting to show rare and endangered species while still being able to pollinate and collect seeds from the blooms.

Finally, there is a way to win a couple of the five stem collection awards. The Red-White-Blue ribbon for five American cultivars is always keenly contested, so you would have to grow a lot of American cultivars to have much chance of winning this award; however, the Maroon ribbon for reverse bicolors and the Purple ribbon for best collection of five standards (which excludes American bred and reverse bicolor collections) are possibilities. To win the Purple ribbon, you would specialize in a particular division like cyclamineus or trumpets or specialize on one of the collections like all yellow, all white, pink cup, or orange/red cup. You would also have to be careful to acquire cultivars that tended to bloom at the same time, not a mixture of early and late season cultivars. When they all bloom, you enter your collection at whatever show is available. If you have rather late varieties, be prepared to take them to the Fortuna show or one of the Oregon shows. With earlier varieties you should be ready to take them to Sutter Creek or Livermore, whichever show occurs when your daffodils bloom. And then there's the Maroon ribbon for reverse bicolors. It's hard for most exhibitors to come up with an entry, but if you grow nothing but reverse bicolors, you've got a chance. Would this really work, you ask. Yes, we've seen it work in Virginia where the great Bill Pannill tends to sweep all the major awards at any show he enters. He does breed and enter reverse bicolors, but we've seen Sarah Burton beat him out for the Maroon ribbon because she's so good at growing the reverse bicolors.

If you think NCDS doesn't have room for more exhibitors to win ADS awards, you're wrong. Several major awards can be seriously contested by small growers. And they should be! After all, the award means more when there's been serious competition for it.

ADS Handbook

If you are going to start exhibiting daffodils, you should own a copy of "Handbook for Growing, Exhibiting, and Judging Daffodils" published by the American Daffodil Society. It is about to undergo a major revision under the able leadership of our own Stan Baird, but the parts on point scoring and exhibiting are still worthwhile. NCDS probably still has some copies for sale. Contact NCDS Secretary Nancy Tackett to see if she has any left for sale. Otherwise, you can order a copy for \$7.25 postpaid by January 31 from the ADS Executive Director, Naomi Liggett at 4126 Winfield Road, Columbus OH 43220-4606. Make checks payable to American Daffodil Society. There is a 25% surcharge for orders between February 1 and May 1 to encourage people to buy their supplies in the off season and not wait until the start of daffodil season.

Membership Renewal

Check the mailing label on this newsletter for the expiration date of your membership. If you think there is a mistake, contact Nancy Tackett at (510) 372-8083 or send her e-mail at nancyt@netvista.net. If there is a blue highlight, your membership has expired or will expire soon and you should renew now. Individual membership is \$8 per year; family membership is \$10 per year. Make checks payable to Northern California Daffodil Society and mail them to Nancy at 066 Green Street, Martinez, CA 94553. In addition to your name and address, please tell Nancy your telephone number and (if you have one) electronic mail address.