

GOLD MEDAL 2003: BRENT HEATH



The American Daffodil Society awards its Gold Medal to an individual in recognition of creative work of a pre-eminent nature in the understanding and advancement of the daffodil.

The 2003 recipient of the ADS Gold Medal is Brent Heath, of Gloucester, VA. Brent Heath is a

third-generation bulb grower, a rare thing in this era of big conglomerates and the disappearance of old family businesses. Brent, with his wife Becky, continues to keep alive an old family firm which was vital to the growing and knowing and showing of daffodils a century ago, and particularly valuable in providing daffodil bulbs to the public during the pre-World War II quarantine on imported bulbs.

Although the Heath family did not have a tradition of hybridizing their own cultivars, Brent is beginning to make his mark there, specializing in small, multi-flowered fragrant hybrids from the upper divisions, which are beginning to find favor in gardens and in shows.

The family business, the Daffodil Mart, was eventually sold to White Flower Farm. Now, on that same family farm in Gloucester County, Brent and Becky run two businesses. Brent and Becky's Bulbs, primarily through mail orders, provides the public with a vast array of heirloom cultivars, miniatures, great garden daffodils, most of the Wister Award winners, and many of the newer cultivars, as well as many other kinds of bulbs.

My Bloomin' Garden, a second business of the Heath family, is a landscape design business specializing in bulbs plus companion plantings. Brent also travels widely and lectures about daffodils, and frequently works with historic landscapes to incorporate heirloom daffodils of the appropriate time period into these much-visited settings. He also serves as a consultant for Time-Life and the American Horticultural Society in their books about bulbs.

Brent and Becky in 1995 published *Daffodils in American Gardens*, with three hundred color photographs, timely general and regional information, and references to resources of the American Daffodil Society and its services. This book has been a missionary for the daffodil with many beginning gardeners who were not (yet) within the American Daffodil Society's ranks. This volume is now in its second edition.

The horticultural world has recognized these contributions. In 2001, the Heaths received the Gold Medal of Honor from the Massachusetts Horticultural Society for “horticultural leadership promoting the use of a wide variety of bulbs in the garden.” In that same year, the American Horticultural Society presented them with the Individual-Commercial Gold Medal. In August of 2002 the Garden Writers’ Association gave the pair a lifetime achievement award and inducted them into the Garden Writers’ Hall of Fame.

The Gold Medal of the American Daffodil Society rewards this lifelong work of educating the general public about daffodils and increasing the stature of the daffodil in the larger horticultural world.