
florida daffodil society news



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THIS SPRING

Each year starts with the pristine show of Paper Whites, fresh red pine straw and hiding weeds. This year rave reviews were heard as far away as Louisiana because there have been no deep freezes, hard frosts, heavy rain or hail or rapid fluctuations in temperature. The early Paper Whites bloomed late, the late bloomed early and every one lasted a long time. But nothing compares to what happened at Goodwood Museum and Gardens west lawn bulb garden in Tallahassee. *N. italicus*, the common January blooming tazetta pass-a-long with its star shaped florets of yellow cups and off white petals, came on like gang busters. The large masses of bloom showed two, not one, semi-circle patterns. All the foliage was so vigorous that the Paper Whites were hidden. It has been ten years since John Van Beck asked Goodwood gardeners to stop mowing the west lawn – and all the “buried treasures” came to light. One forgets that the current fashion of “neat” gardening was not always in vogue – before the 1830 invention of the lawn mower, grass was scythed twice a year, and an unmowed lawn alight with daffodils was enjoyed as a gift of nature.

The FDS had set aside monies to establish fencing, signage and reclaim the west lawn. The remaining funds will be spent this season clearing, marking and relocating hydrangeas so the boundary between the garden and the west woods is visible. Paper Whites will be collected from various holding areas and returned in the form of a large border leading up to the old greenhouse between the rose bed and boxwood hedge. Next year there will be a temporary information sign for the *italicus*, similar to the Grand Primo sign erected this year at the garden maintained by the Violet Circle.

One Rijnveld’s Early Sensation purchased last year sports a doubled center. Did this happen to anyone else? Golden Rain is sold in the catalogues as good for zones 8-10. The leaves look great, but there are never any repeat blooms. This year: 2 Golden Rain blooms, but they blasted so the prohibition on Golden Rain for North Florida still stands. The latest arrival to the FDS has all the markings of a winner. Innisidgeon, named after a rock formation on the Scilly Isles, bloomed in early January – many tiny florets with bright yellow petals and a reddish orange clear colored cup plus a great fragrance. Next year will be review time on our early blooming testees.

FDS ANNUAL FLOWER SHOW

MARCH 4 AND 5

Greenhouse, Tallahassee Nurseries

Showtime is fast approaching! Garden Show Chairman Lori Johnson is hunting greeters and flowers and checking out Mary Maude’s flower refrigeration. Carolyn Hawkins will be coming on Sunday, March 5, to give floral demonstrations at 2, 3 and 4 PM. The Small Daffodil Show is coming together. We will have a schedule booklet, boxwood clippings and professional help for all exhibitors

... so don't worry about name divisions or display procedures. My experience in "benching" daffodils is limited to watching John Van Beck and two helpful ladies trying to groom a sad batch of John's daffodils. The lesson I learned was "Don't pick flowers in a hurry and without your glasses!" Take your time and look for quality and freshness – no rips, mittens, or messy stamens – and do count the petals. Have your container of warm water ready, and a good sharp knife to cut an angled stem. Let the daffodils condition in a cool shaded area for an hour or so and then change the water. Pick the day before, preferably when the sun is high, or a few days ahead and seal in a breath-filled plastic bag, stored flat in the refrigerator.

Daffodils in all divisions and sections are judged either singly or as a group of three of a kind. There is also a ribbon for groups of 5 or 12 different cultivars, and a miniature section. Our approved miniatures include Tête à Tête and Hawera. A section for species (*N. jonquilla*) also includes the wild hybrids *N. x odorus* (Campernelle) and *N. x intermedius*. Last but not least, there is an historic division which includes daffodils with a listed date prior to 1940. So you could bring 9 Carlton, 2yy, 1927, and enter all of them. On Saturday, March 4, we will receive entries from 8:30 to 9:45 AM, as judging will start at 10 AM and the show opens to the public at noon. The show closes at 4:30 PM on March 5, so be there to get your flowers and ribbons and help take down the show! Call 878-9753 if you have any questions.

SOUTHEAST FLOWER SHOW

Opportunity only knocks once, or so the saying goes. When the lady said there had been a cancellation (the man from Alabama who was to speak on citrus couldn't come), being a Floridian, Linda Van Beck said "I can do better than that!" Then the other shoe dropped – no slides allowed and the theme had to be Italy. "Daffodils, the Italian Connection" was born and Sara Van Beck will hold up flower photos*, daf stems, and answer questions. All this takes place February 8 at the Atlanta Convention Center.

Needless to say, there is a lot of interesting material referencing Italy. Three main sources are J. Blanchard's *Narcissus A Guide to Wild Daffodils*, 1990, E.A. Bowles *A Handbook of Narcissus*, 1934, and W.B. Hartland's *Hartland's "Original" Little Book of Daffodils*, 1885. At one time, daffodils, primarily *N. poeticus*, covered northern Italy. The Arno Valley near Pisa was a hot bed of species, the Riviera was one big garden and tazettas reigned in the coastal south. Today, remnants exist and *N. serotinus* is still a common fall-blooming wildflower in the coastal south. Everyone goes to Spain and talks about the goats that eat the daffodils. In Italy, they talk about garden escapees and the long history of their culture. The late 1800's were a time of exportation: Hartland sold *N. princeps*, "The Italian Daffodil" in lots of 1,000. Italian daffodils grown by FDS members include *N. italicus*, *N. papyraceus* and *N. panizzianus*. *N. canaliculatus* breaks down and makes grass in zone 8b. *N. pseudonarcissus* and *N. jonquilla* are also found in Italy.

Thanks to Mary Lou Gripshover, we have a real Italian connection in the form of Dr. Enrico Shejbal, an American Daffodil Society member, long time daffodil grower and bulb/plant nurseryman. His current daffodil collection lists 700 varieties, all grown in huge terra cotta pots. Peak bloom is early April and the season is October to May. There is a maze of websites, including www.domus-bulborum.com, www.bulbi.net and www.floriana.ws for obtaining catalogues. If your Italian is weak, click on *English* for a translated web page, and visit the daffodils of Italy.

BEAUTIFUL ... BUT NOT HEALTHY

As a precaution, one keeps small children from handling daffodil bulbs or cut flowers. A new precaution has been added: keep cats from drinking water in containers with daffodils. Weej Broderson's cat lapped some "daffodil water" and before you could say JACK ROBINSON water and everything else inside the cat came up and spewed everywhere.

BULB SALES REPORT

The big bulb sales were money makers for the FDS. We sold 6,580 bulbs through other Florida garden organizations and 830 bulbs through other bulb societies or businesses. The garden club bulb sales were very small, and we donated approximately 2,900 bulbs for 5 major gardens and small quantities of bulbs to demonstration gardens through Florida and Alabama. The FDS members' sale was strong this year. So the final accounting is: we ordered 12,950 bulbs and ended up with a profit of approximately \$500. This money will be used for purchasing bulbs for the FDS 10 county Florida project.

*Some photos courtesy of Scott Kunst, *Old House Gardeners Catalogue*