

American Daffodil Society Central Region

2905 Gilmore
Des Moines, Iowa 50312

Dear Marilyn,
Hello from the cold Central Region. I hope you like the news better. How about 37 new members - mostly from Illinois that is a record for Central. We are ready for Spring. Hope to see you in Virginia. Don't,

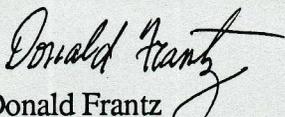
Welcome to the American Daffodil Society!

I know you will enjoy the *Journal*. I urge you to go to some of the shows and meet new friends. You'll find "daffodil-people" are very special. You are not alone, by the way. Our Central Region has had a spurt of growth this year and the entire American Daffodil Society membership welcomes you as a new member.

My wife, Betty, and I came into the daffodil world about twelve years ago when we build a new house next door to "Mr. Daffodil"—Tom Throckmorton and his wife, Jean. Our yards adjoin on a long sloping border, an excellent area for growing daffodils. If you are ever in Des Moines in April, please come and see us.

Betty and I plan to attend both shows being held in the Central Region this year—in Rockford and Glen-coe, Illinois, and the big National Show in the Washington D.C. area. Let me know if you'll be at any or all of them, too.

Just in case you ever have any unanswered questions about daffodils, or sources for bulbs, let me know. I will just pop next door and get the answers!


Donald Frantz
Central Regional Vice President

WHY GROW DAFFODILS ?

Tom D. Throckmorton, M.D.

Everyone should grow some daffodils! They signal the rebirth of a year. After the drab sameness of winter, the daffodil ushers in the burgeoning of spring. Indeed, the daffodil is the first major bloom of the new year. To be sure, a few snowdrops or crocus have managed to creep into the wings, but center-stage is certainly taken and held by the upright, sturdy, golden daffodils. No other flower means spring! Among the other reasons to grow daffodils are:

VARIETY

Daffodil blooms are of greater variety than any other blooming plant. There are great, glowing trumpets two and one-half feet tall, and there are tiny species with trumpets three inches tall. Daffodils are beautifully cupped flowers with white, yellow, pink, orange or red colors—plus a palette of intermediate shade. There are handsomely prim daffodils with tiny colorful eyes, double daffodils in all assorted sizes and shapes. Some are fist-sized clumps of color, some varieties imitate roses or camelias. Tiny multiflower forms hang like fairy lanterns from a graceful stem. Some fill a room with floral or spicy perfume—bearing bunch-flowered blooms that don't look like daffodils at all. Some daffodils are dazzling white flowers with vividly colored cups often called narcissus. Where else in the flower kingdom can such wealth and variety be found in one family?

CLIMATE

Daffodils thrive almost anywhere in the temperate zone—from arid mountain slopes of North Africa, Spain or Portugal to the valleys and plains of southern Canada. They do not particularly enjoy high heat and humidity. All but a very few are hardy throughout the 48 contiguous states. I have unintentionally dropped an odd bulb on open ground and found it putting out green shoots and roots the next spring—despite lying around in -20° F winter weather!

PLANTING

Daffodils require no tedious soil preparation. They like sun, but they bloom and grow when most deciduous trees are relatively leafless. The shade of evergreen plantings is a no-no. They must have good drainage. A bit of a slope or elevation is desirable. Like most plants they are sensitive to microclimates and their early emergence is hastened by planting at the foot of a warm, south facing wall; later bloom is insured by a north-facing slope. The actual planting requires only a small spade and limber back—I have the former and my wife, Jean, the latter (she is also a heck of a weeder). To plant bulbs quickly and easily, thrust the spade its full five or six inches into the ground. Pry upward and forward on the handle to leave a hole. Drop one blub (small end up) into the hold, release the spade, step lightly on the earth to fill it back in, and so on until the planting is done. To plant a clump or new bed, dig out a generous hole about six to eight inches deep. Place the bulbs in on their bases and return the pulverized earth. This is a good time to place the labelling stakes—it is so easy to forget what is planted where.

CULTIVATION

For all practical purposes, daffodils require no cultivation. The occasional weed can be removed by hand or with light hoeing. Soil-stirring activities are not helpful.

FERTILIZERS

Fertilizers sometimes do more harm than good. Daffodils grow in any soil, from heavy clay to deep, fertile loam. They may well do better in clay since they prefer lean to rich living. Once in a while a little pot-ash is helpful. Try throwing ashes from a wood-burning fireplace on over a spring snow.

WATER

Although daffodils dislike wet feet, but they are real lushes where water is concerned. They respond to a good two inches of water per week, throughout their growing season. Steady, generous watering is the best thing you can do for daffodils.

MULCH

Mulch is helpful for keeping down early weeds, conserving water and protecting blooms from being rain-splashed. It is not really required though.

PRUNING

Pruning is not necessary. If you wish, you can pull away the foliage about six weeks after the blooming.

PESTS

Daffodils really have no pest problems. No spraying is needed. On rare occasions, snails or slugs may eat a bloom. Rabbits, mice, ground squirrels, moles and so on are not interested in daffodils because the plant tissue contains a mild alkaloid poison avoided by warm-blooded animals. The "daffodil fly" is not indigenous to our country but is occasionally seen on commercial bulbs. Plant healthy, firm bulbs and the garden will stay healthy.

INTERPLANTING

Daffodils are beautifully set off by interplanting with other spring flowering plants—tulips, crocus, scilla, anemones, grape hyacinths. I especially like the blue of scilla and the colorful Fosteriana hybrid tulips that serve as a contrast to the daffodils. Daylillies team well with daffodils. While the early daffodils hide the nascent hemerocallis foliage fans later daylillies cover the maturing, unattractive daffodil leaves.

OVERPLANTING

Because they bloom early, daffodils may be overplanted with almost any shallow, rooted flower or vegetable later in the season. I have planted string beans, marigolds and zinnias above daffodils. By allowing my grassy weeds to take over the daffodil plantings as the season wears on, soil temperature is reduced, moisture retained and the bulbs seem to fatten appreciately.

MULTIPLICATION

Plant one rose bush and next year (if you are lucky) you have a rose bush. Plant one daffodil bulb, next year you have two, the next year four and so on and on. As these multiple bulbs become crowded and begin to suffer slightly from years of living off the same bit of garden, they may be dug up some lovely day in June. Simply separate the bulbs and store them in a cool, dry place until fall brings bulb planting time again. You can expand the planting or trade your excess with friends for other bulbs you may covet. Bulbs store easily in grocer's net mesh vegetable bags, or slipped inside an old pair of panythose. Knot the legs at intervals and several kinds of daffodil bulbs can be stored in one "container".

FRIENDS

Gardeners who grow daffodils are a friendly lot. They are very big on sharing garden tours, information and even bulbs. Daffodils are a delightful entre into the world of specialized gardens. There are daffodil societies, conventions, journals, books and special tours. Think of it! When you plant your first daffodil bulb, you may well be joining a large, warm family.