

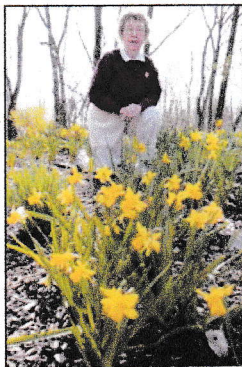
Dedicated to daffodils

By Beth Burwinkel
Enquirer contributor

Years ago Mary Lou Gripshover belonged to a garden club that asked its members to enter something in a spring show. Gripshover didn't know what to offer. She looked in her garden and found a solution: daffodils.

A daffodil was easy, she figured. "You just cut it and stick it in a vase and there it is."

In the four decades since that show, Gripshover has learned much more about growing and showing daffodils. She's taken on roles with the American Daffodil Society, including serving as editor of the *Daffodil Journal*. This month, she becomes president of the American Daffodil Society and hopes to encourage members to plant more daffodils along roadsides and in parks.



Mary Lou Gripshover, who grows nearly 1,000 daffodils in her Milford yard, is the new president of the American Daffodil Society. (Gary Landers photo)

Gripshover grows 800 to 1,000 daffodils in her half-acre Milford yard, a combination of early-, mid- and late-season varieties. She enjoys blooming daffodils for about two months.

Daffodils come in a variety of sizes and colors. Some are fragrant. They have few pests and the bulbs are long-lived.

"People don't know there are colors (of daffodils) besides yellow," Gripshover says.

"My favorite kinds probably are the pink and white ones - just because I like the color combination."

She enjoys hybridizing new daffodils, a five- to six-year process from retrieving a seed to seeing a blossom.

New daffodils are being introduced daily. There's little room in Gripshover's yard, she says, for anything new - "unless I dig something up - which probably will happen."

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Daffodil tips

Plant daffodil bulbs from mid-September until the ground freezes. If it doesn't rain, water the bulbs so the roots will start to grow before it freezes.

Plant only bulbs that feel firm.

Daffodils benefit from a low-nitrogen fertilizer (5-10-10) spread over the bed in the fall and from fireplace ashes spread over the bed in late winter or spring.

After the daffodils finish blooming, wait six weeks before cutting back the foliage. Do not fold the foliage back and fasten it with a rubber band. In the meantime, plant annuals such as marigolds to hide the foliage.

Daffodil bulbs multiply and when the blooms become less frequent, it's time to divide the bulbs.

For a long list of inexpensive and good daffodils, e-mail Mary Lou Gripshover of Milford, president of the American Daffodil Society, at daffmlg@aol.com.

— Beth Burwinkel