



florida daffodil society news

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Think Pink, Think Wet

No, we are not talking about the recent cancer drive (although it is strange that America is one of the few English speaking countries that does not recognize the daffodil as a symbol of hope in the fight against cancer). We want to think pink tazettas. We have never seen a real pink tazetta miniature. Once there was a pink daffodil, Cherie 7W-P, growing in the Van Beck garden. Cherie was a slightly pink little historic daffodil that gave up the ghost 2-3 years ago.

Just as we had given up hope of growing pink daffodils in Florida, there is a wee glimmer of hope -- Harold Koopowitz, the current president of the daffodil society, a hybridizer par excellent of miniature daffodils has written an article in the Society's *Daffodil Journal*. He points out that one of the "Holy Grails" of hybridizing is pink tazettas, which have been extraordinarily difficult to achieve in the past. Harold knows "that using *N. dubius* 8W-WPP that pink tazettas are quite easy to make." 'Little Diane' 8W-WPP is the first of his miniature pink tazettas to be released. More are coming. In the wild, there is variation in all species and *N. dubius* is no exception. "In the wild mountains of Spain, it is widespread and quite variable in height, color, flower diameter and number of florets on the spike". Harold always picks the smallest and prefers scapes that only have 2-4 florets for his hybridizing. "Using the bigger clones for breeding there should be no trouble in making standard pink tazettas."

Unfortunately, this means we might be able to purchase a pink tazetta in 10 years. The road to producing commercial quantities of daffodil bulbs is a long one.

There is a special bulb, *N. alcaracensis*, that grows in the Alcaraz Mountains in Spain. It thrives in bogs where the water can be more than a foot deep -- so there is a possibility that this bulb could be hybridized for garden pools. Harold pointed out "this species also might carry genes for basal rot that could solve one of the most pernicious problems facing daffodil growers in warm climates."

Leap Forward

In the Van Beck garden the call was heard -- not only did the narcissus heed the call -- they haven't stopped coming. Tied for first bloom on November 21 was a recently planted small floret Paper White 8W-W (aka-

Snowflake) and Bill Welch's hybridized tazetta Autumn Pearl 8W-Y. FYI - 'pearl' in the name or description of a daffodil means fade, and in most cases the fade is in the cup.

Growing near the house in partial shade, their stems were 21 inches tall. At Thanksgiving, it was evident that the cold frost (30-34 degrees) made a difference. The open fields are much colder than the areas protected around the house with trees and other plants, even though the day temperatures were often in the 70s. This pattern caused some daffodils to bloom a month early. Now, in mid-December, all early blooming daffodils are up and about. The numerous freezes have not been hard enough to hurt the bulbs, nor have they been burned by frost. Having light, airy mulch offers some protection and, if water hoses haven't frozen, you should wash the frost off the flowers.

Other tazettas that are starting to bloom are *N. Italicus* 8W-Y and Chinese Sacred Lily 8W-Y.

One reason for early blooming can be the natural response of bulbs to relocation. Digging bulbs is life threatening. Pulled out of their cozy home, left out to dry, and finally planted in a new place in the garden -- the bulbs feel vulnerable. Daffodilians just call it "shock". The bulbs' species-preserving response is to get up, get going and set seed if possible.

Purchased bulbs are different. Although they may experience shock, they will bloom late as they have not had time to reset their clocks to their new locations.

This condition explains the early blooming of Omri and Nony that were dug and replanted this year. Those in the protected bed peak bloomed on December 10. Those in the open field, including a planting of Autumn Pearl 8W-Y, started blooming on December 10. Basically these bulbs are blooming one month early.

By now there is enough of a show of the small Paperwhites, Autumn colors, other tazettas and some weeds. If you are interested, call Linda at 850-878-9753 to set up a time to visit the garden.

Testing Goes On

One tazetta we have not previously trialed is Wintersun 8W-Y that has been in the Brent and Becky's Bulbs catalogue for a couple of years. Five bulbs have been purchased and we will take pictures, examine the

pedigree, and keep you posted. If you have grown this tazetta, please let us know.

Bulb Count

The last count of the Van Beck garden was in 2002. As a result of the study, poor or non-blooming bulbs were identified and approximately 100 varieties shipped to the Missouri Botanical Gardens, the bulb depository in the southeast. This year we will count again. The plight of Thalia 5W-W is sad. They did not bloom well last year and had never been lifted. Digging revealed clumps of small bulbs, IE, too small to bloom, so the axiom of digging every 3 years is a good practice. Also, **now** is the time to check under and around the bulbs for mole holes.

BULB SALE INFO

Thank you for your participation in the FDS bulb sale. Sorry we left out the number of bulbs to a bag, which caused some excitement among new members. If your bulbs do not behave, let us know. We are still settling accounts. After the early tribulation of having half of our bulbs while the other half sat in an unloaded boat for over a week in Newport, Va., the rest of the season was fair sailing. We reached our vendors on schedule and have put some money in the bank. In 2014, we purchased and sold 15,300 bulbs. Next year we will specialize in a variety of tazettas as well as selling our standard garden bulbs.

Autumn & Early Winter Blooming



Autumn Colors – Bill Welch’s mixture of early blooming tazettas
Autumn Pearl



Autumn Yellow



Nony



Omri – opening



Omri – at maturity



Small cup Paper White (aka Snowflake)

Dates on photos are incorrect – photos were taken in November - December 2014