



GARDENING GLIMPSES

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Aren't the daffodils glorious? Mostly folks have gotten used to the idea that we're just having an early springtime, and quit worrying about the likelihood of another blustery cold spell killing them all. I do think we might have another freezing episode, but spring's come early.

But not everywhere. If you have mostly gardening friends as your Facebook friends, and have the good sense to add the special group, Daffodilian, you can see what is blooming where.

Atlanta's full of bloom, and not just the early ones - the standard early mid-season ones are gone by. In the Virginia area, the roster is the same.

The most relevant detail about the timing of this year's springtime came from a note in the ADS Historic chat group, noting that "Ice Follies" are just about bloomed out here in Conway, Ark., and this is the signature flower of the regional Daffodil Festival, which will not take place until March 11.

This has been a strange year, without a Central Mississippi Daffodil Society show to look forward to, generally the second weekend in March. I've always known that my new-planted bulbs may not make it in time, but the established plantings, that usually began opening January 25, are long gone by now.

But how many of you have problems with many of your daffodils, long established clumps that usually furnish good bloom, putting up good foliage but no bloom buds at all?

I enjoyed listening to a video of the weekly discussion on Brent and Becky's Bulbs' website. Cannot quite manage to get it live, but have made progress with my computer skills, and can play it back, and the advantage of all the questions and answers that come in on Facebook.

In this week's episode, Jay Hutchins was discussing the problem of clumps that don't bloom. The foliage is good, but no buds come up and no blooms, at least for this year. Last year I'd had that experience with new-planted bulbs,

and was advised that probably they were planted too late, first week in December, and then we had no warm weather.

But Jay says it is just as bad for established plantings, which must have, at some point, about 12 weeks of cold temperature, in the upper 40s, consistently, to set bloom.

And he advised the caller to just let the foliage alone, let it die back naturally, then put some straw over it, and go on about your next stage of gardening.

I peppered him with another question, and will share with you when I get the answer ... when should you fertilize these cold-deprived established clumps? Right now? In early fall? Right as the foliage begins to come up next year?

The Heaths are now strongly advocating no added fertilizer, just planting in raised beds of a good compost mix. That makes it even trickier.

But, people complain, the dying foliage looks so ugly. Well, I say to them, you just have to get your priorities in order. Are you growing daffodils, or are you landscaping?

My Pennsylvania friend Rebecca Brown sends their regional newsletter to me, and it is a pleasure always to read it, especially since I've visited in their Gettysburg home a couple of times, and can picture what she describes.

An artist always, I'm not sure Rebecca can just overlook the dying foliage, as I would do. She uses two plant friends, groundcovers which reseed each year, to cover the beds ... forget-me-nots and feverfew.

Johnny jump ups also work very well indeed.

The problem for me, in dealing with a floral overplanting, is simply this - when do you remove it, to move on to something else, or to fertilize and mulch the daffodil border?

Rebecca also mentions pansies, and of course daylilies, as a distraction in the daffodil bed filled with yellowing leaves. She has no problem with deer; with us, we would be constantly spraying for deer,

Especially with the daylilies, as my most reliable spray works rather permanently but must be put on new growth - which means to have daylilies, for us, would be a constant battle, spraying almost daily.

So you decide what you want, and arrange your priorities. As for me, I'm just trying to discover how best to ensure that the cold-deprived daffodils make their new bulbs and bloom buds.

If gardening was easy, maybe Adam and Eve would have gotten to stay around.

Meanwhile, when Mother Nature offers you a full and beautiful early springtime, just enjoy it.

- See more at: <http://northsidesun.com/columns/gardening-glimpses-34#sthash.GR57Obas.URkUXOhF.dpuf>