

# MATTHEW FOWLDS

By GRANT E. MITSCH, *Canby, Oregon*

Born in Scotland in October 1880, Matthew Fowlds died at Salem, Oregon, December 27th, 1972. Coming to America as a small child, he spent most of his life, until retirement, in Minnesota and South Dakota, subsequently making his home in Oregon. Having had little opportunity for formal education as a child, after training in the field of genetics he became an agronomist for South Dakota State University, and did research in the development of improved strains of grasses, grains, and legumes. Among his accomplishments was the introduction of a strain of hull-less oats. Being interested in botany, he collected and prepared a comprehensive herbarium for his department in the school.

Upon retirement he moved to Oregon, and soon developed a large garden with many rare and unusual plants, growing with them specimens of a variety of the plants with which he worked in South Dakota. In the process of accumulating an extensive collection of plants he became interested in daffodils and soon took up with breeding them, with particular emphasis on the miniature species. These were intercrossed among themselves, and with the larger garden daffodils. After some years' work, and finding that his favorite species, *N. cyclamineus*, was a very temperamental garden subject, he embarked on a plan of developing a strain as much like the species itself as possible, but incorporating several of the small trumpet species into it. He had hoped to impart some hybrid vigor but, by continuous backcrossing with *N. cyclamineus* itself, to maintain its form, and in the end have a little daffodil like this species that could easily be reproduced by seed. Due to the requirement of many generations being raised to reach his goal, and to his advanced age, his work was never completed, and it is feared that most of his efforts were lost.

On the positive side, his crosses involving *N. cyclamineus* and *N. triandrus albus* on the larger daffodils are responsible for most of his named introductions. Perhaps his most popular flower has been Harmony Bells, while Honey Bells has been widely grown as the first triandrus hybrid to set seed with any



**Pixie**

degree of regularity. Others of note include Waxwing (a Honey Bells seedling), Nuthatch, Little Lass, Greenlet, Stint, and the newer Delegate, Chipper, and Kite. Comment and Grosbeak are contributions to the larger daffodils. His Pixie was a lovely little flower, and while a very rapid increaser and profuse bloomer seems to have developed a susceptibility to some strain of virus.

Matthew Fowlds was a most generous, kindly man, and very modest as to his attainments. Few were aware of his accomplishments, and it was fitting that the American Daffodil Society bestow their Gold Medal on him during 1972. He was one of the most popular residents of the retirement home where he spent his last few years. Though never married, he was very fond of children and would read to them by the hour. He never seemed to tire of their questions. He was most industrious, and after retirement he could turn out more work than many men half his age. Though a great lover of flowers and plants, he thoroughly despised weeds, and very few saw the light of day long until they were spotted and destroyed, even though his grounds were very extensive. He was of the "old school" and believed in thorough preparation of the soil, sometimes digging large areas "two spits deep" as Scottish forebears would say. He had little patience with adults who were indolent or wasteful of their means.

We considered Matthew Fowlds one of our closest friends, and often were recipients of his generosity. On many occasions he aided us with planting bulbs, hoeing weeds, or imparting knowledge in the field of botany, genetics, or other realms. His passing is a great loss, not only to his personal friends, but to the daffodil world as well.