

NARCISSUS NOTES

Newsletter of the Midwest Region of the American Daffodil Society

Regional Vice-President - Mrs. Paul Gripshover, Columbus, Ohio

Directors - Miss Virginia Wolff, Scottsburg, Indiana

Mrs. Verne Trueblood, Scottsburg, Indiana

Mrs. Eugene Kleiner, Cincinnati, Ohio

Schools - Mrs. Goethe Link, Brooklyn, Indiana

Treasurer - Wells Knierim, Cleveland, Ohio

Here we are in the middle of Summer. Hopefully all your bulbs are dug, and your orders for new bulbs have all been placed, and you have nothing to do now but sit back and relax until planting time!

-0-

I have been asked how Wells Knierim grows such big daffodils, so at our Fall meeting last year, Wells told us how he does it. So through the magic of the tape recorder, and just in time to inspire you for your planting, here is a condensed version of

WELLS' WAY WITH BULBS

Years ago when George Lee edited the Handbook on Daffodils, he wanted me to write about culture, which I did, and I started out by saying the way you plant a daffodil bulb is to dig a hole, drop a bulb in, and you step on it. I got that idea from seeing a beautiful naturalized planting in Nashville at one of our conventions. There was a dear lady who owned this big estate. She had daffodils planted all over and I asked her how she did it because she obviously didn't get down on her knees like I do to plant daffodils. She said, "Well, I have a stick, and I go around when the ground is soft, and I push the stick in the ground, and drop the bulb in and then I step on it." And they were beautiful. She had them planted in front of a stone wall with a little creek running along side; I still have a slide of that, and I show people how daffodils should be planted. Not like I plant them-- in rows, a foot apart, in nice big rows, you know, because I'm a daffodil nut like most of you people are. But they really ought to be planted in a naturalized setting with stone walls or streams or the edge of a wood or a little hillside or someplace where they look like they belong.

But the way I grow them, and grow them big, is pretty simple-- first of all, what most people don't realize is that they have to have drainage. If you plant daffodils where they're going to stand in water, they're not going to do well. So if you don't have good drainage, those bulbs are going to rot. That's all there is to it, whether it's cold or whether it's hot. So the first thing is to be sure you have them drained. If you can't put in drain tile, like I did, (I put drain tile right underneath the bed, about 18" below the surface of the ground. Of course you need outlets.) raise the beds, or plant them on a hillside where you know the drainage is good.

Now, as Harry Tuggle used to say, you have to dig the beds 18" deep, because the roots go down, and if you're going to have the roots go down properly, you have to have the beds 18" deep. Well, if you'd dig mine 18" deep, you'd run into the hardest clay subsoil you ever heard of--you can't even get a shovel in it, even when it's wet, it's so doggone hard. So I don't plant them that deep. I don't think you have to. It would be nice if you could dig up your ground a foot. But when I'm putting in a new bed, I spade it by hand, and I put the shovel in about as far as it will go, which is about . . . what, a little less than a foot? . . . and I turn it over. And I get a little bit of

the yellow clay with it, but that's all right, it gets mixed in with the soil. But if it's an old garden bed--if I had corn or tomatoes or something else planted there--all I do is till it up with my tiller. The tiller only goes 6" deep at its best. So I never have ground tilled more than a foot, and mostly not that much. I do have a compost pile where I put all my leaves, and tomato stalks and marigolds and zinnias, and when my wife cans tomatoes all the garbage goes on the pile--it's a mess. But I leave it there for a long time--a couple years. Now I have a little rototiller on the back of my tractor, and I run the rototiller over the pile after it gets about 3 years old, and stir it up real good and it's real nice stuff. And I put that on the daffodil beds. Then I put in a couple bales of peat moss, and mix that in, so it's pretty soft stuff, so the roots can get going.

Then, how about fertilizer? Well, there are lots of stories about fertilizer. I've tried about everything, I think. Harry Tuggle used to say use a lot of potash for good color, so I used to try to get 3-12-12. And that was pretty good, but I can't buy it any more. Somehow the stores are always selling stuff for lawns, or garden fertilizer, 5-10-5. So for awhile I was buying 5-10-5 and adding potash to it in these expensive little boxes you buy. Then I got a new friend, by the name of Ray Scholz. I gave him some daffodil bulbs last year, and he said he wanted to buy them. And I said I don't sell daffodil bulbs, I give them away. So he thought he ought to give me something, so I came home one time and I found a couple big sacks of fertilizer there and it was something like 3-20-20. Bean fertilizer. And I thought--I'll save that for next year, as I had my daffodils all planted. That's just great--a lot of potash, a lot of phosphorus and very little nitrogen. In the past I put on Swedish seaweed--supposed to be an enzyme that releases the right amount of fertilizer; and I put on something called G-69, little black stuff you sprinkle around that's supposed to release the fertilizer and give you the bacteria; and wood ashes--every time I'd empty out the fireplace I'd sprinkle that on, and till it in, and oh yes, I gave daffodil bulbs away last year to a friend of mine who grows roses, and he gave me a load of manure, and that was pretty well rotted and I kicked that in, so it's quite a combination of stuff. And Doc Bender, in a round robin, comes out with a little story about epsom salts; he says he put so many hundred pounds of magnesium on his alfalfa and doubled the production of his alfalfa bed. So he tried it on his daffodils. You've seen his daffodils--he grows them big! So if you believe Doc Bender, you'll put epsom salt on your daffodils. Don't ask me where you get it, I don't know. Seed stores don't seem to have magnesium in a reasonably priced sack. You can go to the drug store, but it's sort of expensive to buy small boxes to cover a big area, so don't ask me where you get it. But...when I was using Ray Scholz's bean fertilizer---it says on there: contains the proper amount of magnesium to guarantee a good bean crop. So by golly, I got the magnesium this year in the fertilizer thanks to Ray. But anyway, to be real frank about it, use a fertilizer that's low in nitrogen, because if you are threatened with any diseases, nitrogen will encourage it, and they really don't need it. Stir it in the soil; or if you're planting by hand, mix it up in the hole with your fingers or with a trowel.

When I plant them, I plant them in rows, because I have 1000 varieties. If I plant them in the shrub border I'll lose them sure as the dickens, so I plant them in rows a foot apart. I used to shovel out a long row and put sand in the bottom, then I got to using perlite in the bottom, because the older I get, the less I like to wheel sand, and when you get 9 tons of sand on the end of your driveway, boy, by the time you haul that back to your daffodil beds you don't feel like doing anything except going to bed! So perlite is real light weight. A little more expensive than sand, but you don't have to wheel it. So

nowadays I just take a hoe and mark the row underneath the string--a nice straight row, so when you dig them you know where the bulbs are--and then I take a trowel and dig a deeper hole in the little trench (the trench is only about 3" deep) and I dig another 3" with the trowel, take a handful of perlite, put that in, drop the bulb on top, another hole, perlite, bulb, another hole, perlite, bulb, and away I go. And when I get the whole row done, I take an old coffee can with 10% chlordane--is that a nasty word for garden clubbers nowadays?--it will be pretty soon, but anyway, if you don't want to have daffodil fly, you better put something in there to keep the daffodil fly from eating a hole in your \$20 bulb. Because they'll pick the high priced ones every time. Many years ago I had a lot of daffodil fly, but ever since I've been dusting them with a little 10% chlordane, I haven't seen a daffodil fly. I dust the row of bulbs before I cover them. And if you can't get 10%, get 50% wettable and use less of it. And that will take care of the daffodil fly. Then cover them and you have them planted.

I mark them. I have a Dymo marker and I buy stainless steel tape and emboss the name and the classification right on the tape. Then I go to the store and buy some steel wire--I guess it's used for clothes-line or something--and I cut stakes out of the wire, put a hook on it, punch a hole in the tape, put the tape on the hook, and push the stake clear down to the ground, so little kids don't steal it or stumble over it. That way you have a good marker. The stainless steel is there forever. And that's it. And as quick as possible after you have them planted, make yourself a little map, because if you don't, and you have a lot of nice little kids around your place, just as sure as you don't make a map, you'll have trouble.

So that's it. All you have, really, is soil preparation, drainage, fertilizer, and something to keep the daffodil fly from wrecking them.

--Wells Knierim

-o-

Don't forget, if you are growing any cultivars you think should be on the Approved Miniature List, to write John Larus and suggest they be added. It takes votes from several people before they are added.

-o-

What happens to your daffodil beds after they bloom? Do they rest quietly until next Spring, or do they bloom all Summer long with various plants. I asked Mary Elizabeth Blue that question and here is her reply.

A LETTER TO MARY LOU

Dear Mary Lou,

Every garden page, every garden book, and last month's Journal had--has--wonderful articles about what to have in the border with, while, and after the daffodils bloom. But since you requested such an article from me, I'll give it a try. I shall tell you about my garden--what I planned--and what happened even though I didn't plan it that way.

On the west side of the garden walk are three long beds devoted entirely to daffodils planted four to a row. These beds are perfectly gorgeous from March 25th or before, to May 6 or later. That area is surrounded by a hedge and fences. There are peonies against the fence and old fashioned roses on it. So it is not utterly devoid of bloom and interest. We do not attempt to do anything but keep the weeds down and have it neatly mulched.

On the east side of the walk are the borders. Everyone would like to have a picture book garden or a picture book border. I plant so many daffodils in my borders that there isn't room for anything else--well hardly. I have planted quantities and quantities and quantities (these are long borders) of hyacinths along the edges. The predominate

color is blue...light blue, medium blue and dark blue. In the center of the garden, or focal point, are two old very tall trees. One is a giant black locust, the other an equally giant hackberry with its "witches brooms." Around the base of these two trees, which grow close together, is myrtle which blooms with the hyacinths and repeats the color blue. There are also pink, cream, white, and crimson hyacinths that bloom a little later and perk up the edging. They really complement the daffodils. Visitors comment enthusiastically and sniff with pleasure. While the weather is still cool, sow sweet alyssum seed around the hyacinths. By the time hyacinth leaves have ripened, the little alyssum plants will be coming along briskly and ready to bloom before you know it. Another filler can be glad corms planted in berry boxes in early March and kept in the cold frame to root. After all danger of frost is past, they may be planted, basket and all, in those empty spots in the border. I used to plant glads in rows in the vegetable garden, but think what fun you can have dreaming up color combinations. The young and agile will set out bedding plants of zinnias, marigolds, asters and the like. From there you go to dahlias, chrysanthemums and before you know it you will have more to do than you intended, and wished you had stayed with daffodils. But don't forget you can always put a neat clean mulch over the bare spots and forget the whole idea.

Of course in this spring border we are talking about, you would like to have clumps of tulips here and there under-planted with grape hyacinths. They would be darwin hybrids or triumphs because that is what you see in the pictures with the grape hyacinths all underneath. Be sure to follow with cottage tulips because they take up the slack as the daffodils begin to fade. One of those spots that "just happened" is a row of Crown Imperial Lilies--the orange ones--against a grey painted fence. In front of them is a planting of Brunswick, a 2b lemon cup, and along the edge, dark blue hyacinths. In that spot I had some daisies called "Little Miss Muffet." They bloomed early and in such a spritely manner that the eye is distracted from all that maturing foliage. Sweet rocket invaded this area, which called for a defense action even though it is right pretty when in bloom. One border is fairly wide so that it will accommodate iris, daylilies, coral bells, speedwell, correopsis and all those other plants that are listed on the graphs that are underneath the picture book borders. Mary Lou, I never was very good at math. Tall plants always appeared in the front of the border, and you know what was growing in the back. I have seen beautiful borders created by amateurs and I strongly recommend the method, because every now and then I find that even I have created a picture. A garden has many moods. There is a constant ebb and flow of colors, forms, and fragrance from the first saucy crocus to the muted shades of chrysanthemums at autumn's end. The end of spring is marked by the blooming of the purple and white wisteria. Its fragrance and lushness of bloom is so overpowering that it is like to an organ when all stops are pulled out and the great chords vibrate with a resounding crescendo. The melody of this spring symphony lingers in the air. The trees are in new leaf now and make shifting shadows and patches of sunshine. The sweet-scented, cream-colored locust petals flutter softly to the ground.

Everything should end right now, but my old sundial has the inscription: "Grow old along with me. . . the best is yet to be." So let's pull up the weeds that crowd the chrysanthemums and plan a little plan for next year's Daffodil border.

Yours still full of conversation,
Mary Elizabeth

P.S. Yesterday I had five visitors, ages ten to twelve. They were looking over the back fence so I invited them in. The two little boys were highly interested and asked many questions. One of the little girls, being of a very practical mind, said, "Do you grow all these daffodils and tulips for sale?" To which I replied, "No, I didn't." Her brother by then sensed what was back of it all and explained, "She grows 'em, 'cause she likes 'em."

WELCOME, NEW MEMBERS

We are happy to welcome the following new members to the ADS, and we hope to see them at meetings and shows.

Mrs. Dorothea B. Wiley, 2843 Case Rd., Columbus, Ohio 43220
Mrs. James A. Schmidt, Jr., 2651 Shrewsbury Rd., Columbus, Ohio 43221
Mrs. Frederick Wassmann, 3550 Belmont St., Bellaire, Ohio 43906
Mrs. W. J. Newill, 10245 Virginia Lee Dr., Dayton, Ohio 45459
Mrs. Juanita M. Baker, 212 E. North St., West Manchester, O. 45382
Mrs. Harold R. Trinkle, 1802 Wilene Dr., Dayton, Ohio 45432
Mrs. William Segmiller, 2305 Haverford, Columbus, Ohio 43220

-o-

Several Daffodil Societies are planting bulbs in public places. Dayton area members of the Southwest Ohio Daffodil Society will be planting daffodils at the new Wegerzyn Garden Center. As Christine Hanenkrat says, "If daffodils are to grow at this new facility, it will depend on gifts of bulbs from those of us who love them." Send bulbs to Christine at 266 Floyd Ave., Dayton, Ohio 45415.

The Central Ohio Daffodil Society is planting beds of daffodils at Whetstone Park. This project began last year with the planting of about 125 cultivars, and more will be added this year. There will also be a bed devoted to amateur hybridizers, and we would also welcome bulbs from any of our hybridizers. Bulbs may be sent to Ruth Pardue, 2591 Henthorn Rd., Columbus, Ohio 43221.

Mary Elizabeth Blue, of Chillicothe, has presented a gift of daffodils to her alma mater, Columbus School for Girls. Some bulbs being ordered are proven parents, such as Green Island and Chinese White, and it is hoped that some hybridizing can be done in connection with the Science Department.

-o-

The Central Ohio Daffodil Society, on very short notice, had a booth at the Dispatch Home and Garden Show in March. This proved to be a very worthwhile project. Educational posters, catalogs, and hand-outs about culture and good varieties acquainted many people with the great number of daffodils available--and with the local society. Cut blooms were available of trumpets and tazettas, but the biggest conversation starters were the miniatures (asturiensis and Bagatelle) cut from my garden. People couldn't believe they were real--or that they were in bloom already.

-o-

This will be my last newsletter to all of you. At the Board meeting in April, the Board created a new position--that of ADS Show Reporter. I have since been appointed by President Roese to fill that position. Since the by-laws do not allow one person to fill two Board positions, I have regretfully resigned as your RVP. I have enjoyed receiving your letters and meeting some of you at shows and Regional meetings. Ruth Pardue, Columbus, Ohio, has been appointed to fill the unexpired term as RVP, and I know you will all be as helpful to her as you have been to me.

-o-

Plans are underway for the Fall Regional Meeting to be held in Columbus on October 4. Details will be announced later, but do mark this date on your calendar now.

-o-

One last word--Although we are supposed to send in our symposium ballots by July 1, I'm sure Mrs. Capen will still accept them. So if you haven't yet sent in your ballot--do it now!!

Mary Lou Grepsbauer