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## Only official daffodil garden in W.Pa. open during April

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Flowers on display at the 2013 Daffodil Show at Joe Hamm Daffodil Farm

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With registered names such as Pink Ice, Royal Oak, Lilac Delight and Tahiti, you might not think these flowers are daffodils, but those varieties and many more are on display at a local American Daffodil Society display garden this month.

Joe Hamm, of Hopewell Township, who has focused on growing the cheerful yellow flower since the 1990s, opened his gardens for the month of April. Next week, the Western Pennsylvania Daffodil Growers South chapter will present the "2014 Late Poet's Society Show" at Hamm's barn, 99 Maple Road, from 1:30 to 7 p.m. April 26 and 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. April 27.

There are 29,000 varieties of daffodils and Hamm grows 2,000 different ones. His focus is on historic blooms, which predate 1940.

His sister, Georgine Materniak, travels from her home in Squirrel Hill to help with the flower gardens, because Hamm had both legs amputated in 2010 because of a medical issue, shortly after moving to Hopewell. She said her brother is striving for more variety and less quantity with his daffodil gardens.

"It's almost like an archive, a living archive," she said of the gardens which take up two acres of Hamm's property.

Last fall, Hamm's garden received its official recognition from the ADS as a display garden, the only such garden in Western Pennsylvania and only the second one in the state.

In order to qualify as an ADS display garden, all daffodils must be clearly marked with registered name, color code and date of introduction. The beds must be well-maintained and the gardens open to the public during the blooming season. The gardens also are reviewed twice a year by ADS officials.

This year, ADS members and nonmembers will submit entries for the juried show April 26. Hamm said some of the exhibitors are coming from West Virginia, Maryland and Indiana. Entries will be accepted from 6:30 a.m. April 26 with three panels of judges beginning their judging at noon.

This is the third such show for Hamm. His last show brought in 394 flowers but he expects more entries this year.

In addition, the Martha Washington Garden Club of Washington will have floral arrangements featuring daffodils on display. They also will be judged at the show.

There are 13 divisions of daffodils in the ADS, ranging from trumpet daffodils to the more ornate double or split cupped daffodils which, at first glance, may appear to be a different flower altogether. And lest you think daffodils are just yellow, there are pink, white, orange, red and green varieties as well.

Entries must have been grown in the open by the exhibitor. Daffodil specimens must be shown without foliage although boxwood is provided for staging the blooms, helping the stem stand straight in a glass tube.

"They look completely different in the show than out in the field," Hamm said.

Hamm said judges will look on the back of the flower for minimal green and on the petals for "mittens," which are small nicks or notches. They also look for good "clocking," in which the petals are in clock-hand positions such as 12 and 6 or 10 and 4.

Also important to the judges will be good pose, with the bloom facing nicely off a straight stem. Asked if competitors ever try to cheat, Hamm laughed and said there were instances when uncooked spaghetti was inserted into a stem to keep it straight.

Daffodils are not native to the Americas, but were brought from Europe. They thrive in the spring because they are poisonous so deer do not eat them as they do other flowers.

Daffodil bulbs also are long-lasting. Each July, Materniak and Hamm's neighbor, Carol Stough, dig up clusters that need to be separated, put them in large onion bags and dry them thoroughly for about 6 weeks.

Hamm makes those bulbs available to people interested in purchasing them. And there's something about folks who grow daffodils and attend daffodil shows, said Materniak.

"They're a nice group of people," she said.

To reach the display garden from Washington, take Route 844 and go approximately five miles from the split with Route 18. Make a left onto Route 331. Travel about one mile and turn right onto Maple Road. Hamm's barn is on the left.

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