

SOUTHERN REGION NEWSLETTER
February 23, 1987

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We welcome the following new members that have joined since our last newsletter:

Vincent J. DeFatta, 516 Turtle Creek Dr., Shreveport La. 71115

Dr. W. W. Walley, 804 Mississippi Drive, Waynesboro, Miss. 39367

Mrs. John Wesley, 2207 Ashmore Avenue, Chattanooga

GROWING DOUBLE DAFFODILS IN THE DEEP SOUTH

Theodore E. Snazelle, Ph. D.

Some of my friends feel that I have had some success growing double daffodils here in the deep South. There is an element of truth in what they think; however, I am hard pressed to give an intelligent response to their question: "How do you grow good doubles?" Suddenly, the talkative individual that I am becomes almost mute. No, I don't have any sure fire secret method for success in growing doubles that I don't want to divulge. No, I haven't run any carefully controlled experiments to determine what factors are involved in getting doubles to

bloom and notblast. Justifiably, the question can be asked, "Then what do you know about growing doubles?" I am not really sure that I know anything special; however, I have made several observations which perhaps should be scrutinized more fully in a controlled experiment:

1. It seems that the cultivars with the fewest petaloids bloom more regularly than those which are more fully formed. One of my favorite doubles is Eastertide 4 Y-Y; it has an enormous number of petaloids, and it blasts for me every year. Cultivars like Tonga 4 Y-R and Tahiti 4 Y-R with fewer petaloids bloom reliably for me almost every year. Both of these cultivars came from Lionel Richardson cross Falaise X Ceylon.
2. All daffodils seem to require a lot of water at the time of blooming; double daffodils are no exception. Thus, I water my doubles a little almost every day as the buds are swelling, beginning to show color, and coming into full bloom. It seems that the perianth segments and petaloids must be fully turgid, i.e. full of water, in order to open properly. Watering appears to have been particularly helpful in getting white perianth types, e.g. Lionel Richardson's Gay Challenger 4 W-R and John Lea's Achentoul 4 W-OOR, to open fully. However I still have the problem of the backs of the perianth segments being greenish. Personally, I think that judges make too much of this fault as the green is usually most pronounced on the backs of the outermost perianth segments which are actually petaloid sepals, i.e. sepals which are colored like the inner three petals rather than green as sepals usually are. Thus, why the concern about doubles having a little green on the backs of some of the perianth segments; it is in their genes!

3. Also, it appears to me that some of my doubles do better if they are lifted and replanted every year. Perhaps getting them out of the always hot, sometimes moist soil, helps the new flower bud to develop better in the bulb. My first evidence for the effect of annual digging and replanting came when I dug a clump of Van Sion 10 Y-Y; they bloomed well the next year with fully open blooms. Since then, they have either blasted every year or have partly opened giving that grotesque bloom that turned people away from doubles for years.

4. Lastly, double daffodils seem to be no exception from other daffodils grown in the Deep South; the earlier they bloom the better they do. It does seem to get hot in the Deep South all too early each growing season, and the late blooming daffodils pay the price with blooms which at best open and pass within a single day.

In the final analysis, what I can say to would-be growers of double daffodils in the Deep South is: Go ahead and give them a try. Who knows? You might even be successful!

Spring is arriving in Mississippi with daffodils just beginning to break through, some with foliage 4 to 5 inches high, others taller with large buds ready to burst open with a few warm sunshiny days to speed them along.

My greatest thrill of the season is the first bloom that pops open. In early January, in a protected area, I had Tiffany 12 W-W in bloom, in the garden Tarlatan opened, and then the latter part of January Nylon 12 W-W and several un-named Bulbocodium hybrids bloomed.

I tried something new for me this year, just as Tiffany was opening we had a hard freeze. To save the blossoms I made a mini-greenhouse over each clump with a quart plastic freezer carton, put a rock on top of each one to keep the wind from blowing it away. It did save the blooms, which I enjoyed for a much longer time. On my kitchen table I have Soleil D'or from a bed in the garden, also Lobularis is blooming, and old Virignis is in full bloom on teh road banks, and in many other places in the community.

This year I did get my beds fertilized with 0-20-20, and got enough to fertilize again after blooming. The local Co-op doesn't always keep that in stock.

Do you have trouble with blackbirds? I do! I had all my beds mulched with straw and pine needles, they looked great, no weeds or grass, and then the birds moved in. Now my mulch is all topsy-turvy from "bird scratching". In looking for a few good points I decided I should not have any problems with bugs, surely the birds ate those, and maybe where I had the mulch a little heavy I won't have to move it so the daffodils can come through. Last year it was so dry that the foliage just pushed the mulch up like an umbrella, but we've had more rain this winter, and the mulch has rotted better.

Ted Snazelle grows the best double daffodils of anyone I know here in the Deep South. Our hot, dry wind makes so many of them blast deform, with green on the backside. Some time I get disheartened, but then I'll get a few perfect ones, and I always think next year they will all be like this. Maybe after reading Ted's article and putting a few of his practices into my gardening I'll be able to grow better doubles. I do hope all of you enjoy his article as much as I did. Thanks, Ted, and my appreciation for taking time to share your ideas with us.

As most of you know I will be going out as your Regional Vice-President in April at the Convention. I must say it has been a challenge and a delight to serve you. I'm sure the Nominating Committee will have a most capable person to take over, but, if at any time I can be of help, please call on me.

This being my last newsletter I wish each of you the best daffodil season ever.

Martha Anderson