

MARYVILLE WOMAN BREEDS, GROWS AND JUDGE'S DAFFODIL VARIETIES

RIGHT: Lois Van Wie shows some of her daffodil varieties at her home in Maryville.

LEFT: Hot Gossip Daffodil



PHOTOS BY AMY SMOTHERMAN BURGESS/NEWS SENTINEL



Flowering PASSION

BY SCOTT BROOKS
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LEFT: Hot Gossip
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One of the sure signs of spring in the Smokies is the bright yellow blooms of daffodils. But in the foothills of Maryville, you can find daffodils all year long in Lois Van Wie's backyard.

"And they're not always yellow," she said.

The daffodils you often see in a flower store are known as King Alfreds, bred to be big and bold. But Van Wie's yard is often a rainbow of yellows, whites, pinks and other colors. "It depends on the varieties and when they bloom."

Van Wie has more than 200 varieties of daffodils planted around her property, all marked with small signs naming them. "It's easy to get them confused."

There are over 20,000 varieties of daffodils in the world, she explained. Many of them are hybrids — new flowers created by cross pollinating existing kinds. They have names like Polly's Pearl, Rapture, Snook and Angel's Whisper. "The breeder gets to name them. I haven't named any officially yet," she said.

But she does breed them, grow them and judge them at flower shows around the country.

Her love affair with daffodils started nearly 50 years ago. "My mother grew them. She gave me some bulbs."

From a few bulbs grew a passion. Now, at age 86, she has less space than she used to for a garden. Van Wie moved into a senior community in 2007. She still has a yard and grows her flowers year-round.

"Space isn't really an issue," she said, tending the neat rows of daffodils. "They don't need much room. It's a great stress reliever."

She said daffodils are very strong, but some varieties grow better than others in the South. "The soil isn't the best here, nor is the climate. There are too many changes in temperature."

As for a favorite daffodil, it's never easy to choose. "I like whatever is blooming at the time."

Since Van Wie knows a thing or two about daffodils, it's not hard to believe that



Chaffinch Daffodil

she uses her knowledge and keen eye for detail as a judge for flower shows.

"You look at the color, the shape and the petals to see if they are crisp."

Her next event will be the annual East Tennessee Daffodil Society show in Knoxville on March 28 and 29.

"A show is a great place to see it all. It's much better than in a catalog or magazine," she said.

The Knoxville show is free and open to anyone who wants to come and look. Van Wie said as long as you can grow a daffodil, you can enter the contest. It's as simple as that.

"If you grow something you love, show it to people."

Scott Brooks is a freelance contributor to the News Sentinel.

EAST TENNESSEE DAFFODIL SOCIETY SHOW

■ When: 1-5 p.m. Saturday and Sunday, March 28-29

■ Where: Plant Science Building Auditorium (Ellington Hall), University of Tennessee Agriculture Campus

■ Admission: Free

■ Program: 3 p.m. Saturday, Delia Bankhead, from Hendersonville, N.C., will lecture on miniature daffodils. She grows over 200 miniature daffodils and is chairman of the Miniature Committee of the American Daffodil Society.

■ Info: 865-938-4252 or 865-984-9069