

Miniature Daffodils

ROBERTA C. WATROUS

For years we American miniature daffodil enthusiasts have been told by British friends that there seems to be much more interest in miniatures in the United States than in England. It was rather hard for me to believe, after seeing for the first time the sweeps of *Narcissus cyclamineus* and *N. bulbocodium* in Windsor Great Park last March, and the many fine pots of daffodil species, cultivars, and seedlings in the Early Spring Show and the Daffodil Competition at Vincent Square on March 14 and March 28 (1972). These inspiring displays, however, I reflected, were produced by comparatively few professionals, specialist growers, or advanced amateurs, under conditions of natural advantage or careful protection. In America I know no comparable naturalized plantings of miniatures, we have no specialist miniature growers, few devotees of daffodils have glasshouses and only a handful have done much hybridizing with miniatures. The impression of greater interest here must depend on the large number of amateur gardeners who order bulbs of miniature cultivars and wild forms from English and Dutch sources, and on the attention that has been given to miniatures by the American Daffodil Society.

The American Daffodil Society (A.D.S.) supplies a number of special Ribbons and other awards for competition at shows that meet certain requirements. It was in this connection that the Society, after considerable study and debate, decided to establish an "Approved List of Miniatures" instead of using measurements of flower and stem to qualify entries in competitive classes. There was too much variation in the flower size and stem length of the same cultivar grown under widely differing conditions to make any fixed measurement qualifications acceptable. According to A.D.S. award rules, at least one class for miniatures must be scheduled in all except very small A.D.S.-approved shows, and varieties on the approved list may not be shown in other classes. Additions to the list are considered annually, on recommendations made by members growing newer cultivars. The criteria for inclusion are:

1. It must be suitable for the small rock garden.
2. It must be unsuitable for exhibiting in the standard classes.
3. It must fit in well with the present list.

The original list was compiled from votes taken over a two-year period on about 200 species and garden varieties. At present there are 96 cultivars on the list and 25 species or wild forms.

In American shows of 1972 approved by A.D.S., special miniature

awards (ribbons or medals) were awarded in 32 shows, and in the show I am most familiar with 17 of a total of 118 classes were for miniatures. In this show exhibitors are allowed to make multiple entries in the miniature section, resulting in the display of a wide range of cultivars by divisions, and a smaller number of species and wild forms. There was only one class for miniature seedlings under number, shown by the originator.

Various difficulties of supply have accompanied the growing interest in miniatures. Mr Alec Gray's retirement was a blow, as his originations, his catalogues, and his writings were such an inspiration to so many of us. More than half of the cultivars on our approved list were raised by him, and he made available others by various known or unknown raisers, as well as species and wild forms. We now look hopefully to Mr Bootle-Wilbraham to carry on at Broadleigh Gardens. Michael Jefferson-Brown includes numerous small daffodils in his list, and indicates the ones that are on the A.D.S.-approved list.

New miniature trumpets are coming from J. Gerritsen, the originator of the popular 'Little Gem' and 'Little Beauty'; 'Bagatelle', 'Minidaf', 'Piccolo' (all 1a), 'Lilliput' and 'Tosca' (1b) have already been added to the approved list. G. Zandbergen-Terwegen's list includes a number of miniatures. Our own Grant Mitsch in Oregon has introduced several miniature and near-miniature cultivars bred by himself or the late Matthew Fowlds, and offers a few other miniatures in his catalogue. (Since writing this I have received his 1973 catalogue, introducing my first three!) Many cultivars have become scarce, however, and some are impossible to locate.

Fortunately enough of the older miniature hybrids are readily available to provide a good range of types for gardeners becoming interested in miniatures. Among trumpets, in addition to the Gerritsen cultivars mentioned above, 1a's 'Charles Warren' and 'Wee Bee', 1b 'Rupert', and 1c 'W. P. Milner' may be mentioned. There are only a few miniatures in Divisions 2 and 3, and these are not widely available at present. In 1972 Broadleigh Gardens offered 2b 'Tweeny' and 3b's 'Paula Cottell' and 'Segovia'; Mitsch offered 2a's 'Marionette' and 'Mustard Seed'. All of these cultivars were bred by Alec Gray, and it is hoped that they will become more plentiful. Division 4 is well represented by 'Kehelland', 'Pencrebar' and 'Wren', all soft yellow.

It is when we come to Divisions 5, 6, and 7 that the special charms of miniatures are most apparent. Somehow the multiple florets of the jonquilla and triandrus groups, and the reflexed perianths of triandrus and cyclamineus seem more appealing in small than in large flowers. 'Hawera' and 'April Tears' are rivals for first place in Division 5. Of triandrus-jonquilla parentage, they combine in slightly different proportions the form and colouring of the parents. In neither are the perianth segments so sharply reflexed as in the triandrus parent, but there is a little more of the trimness of *N. jonquilla* in 'April Tears', and it is a bit deeper in colour. Of similar parentage, but classified as 7b instead of 5b, is 'Pease-Blossom', smaller and paler than either of the others.

If "graceful" is the word most often used in describing triandrus, then "jaunty" is what we need for cyclamineus. Because they bloom

so early the small cyclamineus hybrids are especially cherished, and 'Tête-a-Tête' was the top favourite miniature in a recent American Daffodil Society Symposium voting. It has so many good qualities: earliness, cheerful yellow-and-orange colouring, distinctive form, durable substance; it blooms freely (typically with two florets to the stem) - what more could we ask of a small daffodil? 'Jumble' and 'Quince' came from the same seed pod as 'Tête-a-Tête', and these three are the only known grandchildren from a cross between *N. cyclamineus* and the tazetta cultivar 'Soleil d'Or' made more than 60 years ago by A. W. Tait in Portugal. 'Jumble' and 'Tête-a-Tête' inherited the brilliant contrasting colours of 'Soleil d'Or'; 'Quince' is the paler yellow of its perianth. 'Jumble' has the most sharply reflexed segments, 'Tête-a-Tête' the least. In my experience 'Jumble' has less tendency to produce multiple florets than either of the others. Other small cyclamineus hybrids, of trumpet-cyclamineus parentage, are usually yellow, but the creamy white 'Snipe' and the bicolor 'Mitzy' are exceptions.

'Sundial' and 'Bobbysoxer' lead the group of miniature jonquil hybrids. 'Sundial' blooms earlier, the smooth round small yellow flowers usually come two to the stem, and it is in all respects a most satisfactory cultivar. 'Bobbysoxer', with slightly larger flowers, usually single, blooms later and has more orange in the cup. Others of similar style are 'Bebop', 'Clare', 'Stafford', and 'Demure', in whose pale yellow cups one may imagine a hint of peach. Winding up the season are 'Baby Moon' and 'Baby Star', more like selected clones of *N. jonquilla* than hybrids in my opinion.

'Minnow' is a delightful little tazetta hybrid, with several pale yellow florets to the stem. It increases rapidly.

There are no cultivars approved as miniatures in Divisions 9 and 11. Some years ago D. and J. Blanchard added diversity of colour and time of blooming to the hoop-petticoats with 'Nylon', 'Jessamy', 'Muslin', 'Poplin', 'Taffeta', and 'Tarlatan', now classified in Division 12. When available these cultivars are rewarding in coldframes for winter bloom, or in the open garden in mild climates.

While many of the "species, wild forms and wild hybrids" of Division 10 are as appealing as the miniature hybrids, they vary more in their requirements, and disappointments are frequent. This is especially likely when, as so often happens, the bulbs purchased were collected halfway through their growing season. Sometimes only a small proportion of the bulbs supplied are of blooming size. On the whole, it is well for beginners to put most of their hopes on the more reliable hybrids, learning by experience or reading how to handle the wild kinds. Some of these latter will disappear in a year or so; others will scatter seed and form colonies when conditions are favourable.

Hybridizing with miniatures is a special satisfaction, even when done on a small scale. The chances of producing something distinctive are much greater if you work with some of the smaller species that have not been exploited so long or so intensively as the larger ones, as *N. rupicola* or *N. scaberulus* instead of *N. jonquilla*. I also try to use the less common small white or bicolor trumpets, or small cyclamineus-trumpet hybrids instead of the more common small yellow trumpets,

in crosses with small species or with one another. One of my most exciting seedlings (from 6a 'Mitzy' \times *N. cyclamineus*) appeared to be an albino *N. cyclamineus*; unfortunately it disappeared after two or three years, but I keep hoping to duplicate it. The neophyte hybridizer should be warned that most jonquilla and triandrus *hybrids* are sterile, although the parent species are usually very productive.

Many small daffodils too large to qualify as miniatures by rule or vote are nevertheless delightful both in the garden and – especially – as cut flowers. It is to be hoped that all of these will not be lost as official interest centres on large "standard" and small "miniature" cultivars.