

Daffodils Down Under November, 1997



If you garden in the Southern Hemisphere—or even if you live in the Northern Hemisphere and want to import daffodil bulbs from there—now is the time to be writing specialist growers for catalogs.

There are no daffodils native to the Southern Hemisphere, but bulbs were brought over with the early European settlers and are now as important a part of spring gardens there as they are in the Northern Hemisphere.

Tasmania has near-perfect climate for daffodils, and daffodil breeding has been going on there for years. C.E. Radcliff and his family have been in the forefront of breeding pink trumpet daffodils; ‘Pink o’ Dawn’ and ‘Dawnglow’ date to the 1930s and are the basis of many modern-day pink trumpets. These days, the Radcliff family is on the leading edge of developing orange trumpet daffodils.

William Jackson, Sr., began breeding daffodils in Tasmania in 1929. He was followed by his son, William. Grandson David and his wife, Robin, now carry on the business. David has been awarded the prestigious Peter Barr Memorial Cup by the Royal Horticultural Society in England for his work with daffodils. The Jackson cultivars are well-known to exhibitors around the world who appreciate the smooth, flat perianths which David is breeding into his flowers. Jackson cultivars which are making their marks at American shows include ‘Banker’, ‘Graffiti’, ‘Who’s Who’, ‘Nynja’, and ‘Sea Legend’ among others.

Rod Barwick, doing business as Glenbrook Bulb Farm, is becoming well-known for his work with miniature daffodils, although he breeds standard daffodils as well. His series of winter-blooming *N. cantabricus* hybrids include ‘Fyno’, which usually blooms by December here, followed by ‘Kholmes’, ‘Spoirot’, and ‘Smarple’. These are planted in pots in my coldframe and brought indoors when in bloom, and then returned to the coldframe. They all want a completely dry summer, so the pots go into the garage and are brought back out in September. ‘Angel’s Whisper’ is an elegant miniature with usually four pendent lemon-yellow blossoms per stem; it has the added bonus of fragrance. Sister seedlings ‘Angel’s Breath’ and ‘Angel o’ Music’ are equally charming.

In mainland Australia, Rex and Kath Breen continue the business of J.N. Hancock and Co. The business goes back to 1950. They grow bulbs in quantity for the mass market, and have many hybrids to their credit.

Check out the [Tasmanian Daffodil Page](#) (see links) for some photos and information about some of the other Tasmanian growers.

Daffodil growing in New Zealand began in the 1890s. The late Phil Phillips, of Otorohanga, used to plant a quart or more of daffodil seed each year. Spud Brogden continues the business begun by his father in 1935. 'Dynasty', shown at the top of this column, is a Brogden-bred bulb. Peter Ramsay and Max Hamilton, doing business as Koanga Daffodils, are the new kids on the block commercially, but have long been among the leading exhibitors in New Zealand.

As is the case with most specialist daffodil growers, these growers began breeding daffodils to compete in local shows. As their blooms began winning prizes over established cultivars, others wanted to buy the bulbs. And so the businesses began. Be prepared for "sticker shock," however, as the prices for a single bulb can vary from \$5.00 for an established cultivar to \$250 for a new hybrid. But bear in mind that it takes four to six years for a daffodil to bloom from seed, and then it takes several more years for the grower to decide if it's worth naming, and then still more years before the grower has enough bulbs to offer a few for sale. So we're talking about maybe fifteen years of work before the first bulb is offered for sale. And the laws of supply and demand will take over—as the supply increases, the price will come down. New Zealand growers also pass on the cost of bulb inspection to their overseas customers. This ranges between \$20 and \$40, depending on the supplier.

If you order bulbs from down under, bulbs will arrive in February or March. If your ground is frozen, plant the bulbs in pots and refrigerate them until the weather moderates, and then slip the bulb out of the pot into the ground. Choose a somewhat shady location, and the bulbs will usually put up a bloom in June or July. Keep the foliage green as long as possible. The bulbs should then settle down into life in the Northern Hemisphere, sending up growth at the normal time the following spring.

If you'd like to try a few bulbs, here are some addresses to get you going:

Jackson's Daffodils, P.O. Box 77, Geeveston, Tasmania 7116, Australia

Glenbrook Bulb Farm, 28 Russell Road, Claremont, Tasmania 7011, Australia

J. N. Hancock & Co., Jacksons Hill Rd., Menzies Creek, Victoria 3159, Australia

Koanga Daffodils, P.O. Box 4129, Hamilton East, New Zealand

Brogden Bulbs, 41 Grey Street, Normanby 4852, Taranaki, New Zealand

Oh! Don't forget to pick up some paperwhite bulbs locally to grow in pebbles and water for winter bloom.