

DAFFODILS IN SPAIN

February, 1998

How does the song go? Wild thing, you make my heart sing? Something like that, anyway. That pretty accurately describes my feelings when I saw daffodils growing in their native habitat in Spain several years ago.



My traveling companions and I left the Madrid airport, heading south. In rolling countryside with scrub oak growing among rocks, someone comments that the terrain looks promising for daffodils. Yeah, right, think I. Sure enough, within a couple of minutes the creamy blooms of *N. triandrus* subsp. *pallidulus* (pictured) were spotted. We stopped for a closer look, and found that *N. triandrus* grows singly, not in clumps.

The following day we found more *N. triandrus* near a picnic area. Much further up the hill *N. cantabricus*, best described as a white *N. bulbocodium*, was found, most of which was in seed.

The next species we found was the miniature yellow *N. baeticus* which John Blanchard calls *N. assoanus* var. *praelongus*. It was growing in great profusion on the mountainside in unbelievable limestone rocks. We're talking major boulders here!

We headed next to Cazorla National Park. Our route took us by a site that had been mentioned for *N. cuatrecasasii* var. *segimonensis*, another miniature yellow flower. Again, it was growing in limestone rocks, some right along the road, and some higher up.

My companions had seen *N. longispathus* growing in Cazorla National Park on a previous visit and were anxious to find it again. We found it growing amongst bracken in grass. Most had one typical yellow trumpet bloom per stem, but a few had the more desirable two blooms per stem.

We set out next for the Sierra de Salinas, checking likely locations for *N. dubius*. We were about to give up, and head further north, but decided to check one more location. Our veteran hiker volunteered to climb up to look, just in case. She came running down saying, "It's up there, it's up there!" So we climbed up, too, and there it was. It was mostly over, but we found lots of seed capsules—one, two, three, and even four per stem; some short, some tall. We found one with its two white blooms open that was in fair condition.



We set out early next morning for Valdelinares searching for *N. pseudonarcissus* ssp. *eugeniae*. After looking in vain for some time, we headed down the mountain and finally found *N. ps. eugeniae* (pictured) in abundance growing in very short turf. It grew all over the hillside, but there seemed to be a river of yellow as it followed the runoff from the melting snows down the mountain. The blooms open almost at ground level and though they are short, the flower is not in proportion. Some have wide perianths, some are starry.

We next went looking for *N. gaditanus*. We found this small yellow flower growing along the road, though it looks very much like the *N. assoanus* which we found later. John Blanchard says in his book that "the eastern ones [where we were] seem more akin to *N. assoanus*, but the chromosome structure appears to be different." As with so many of the others, it grew in limestone rocks; the foliage was sprawling on the ground.

The next day we headed for a Monasterio where *N. jacetanus* had been reported. There was little to be seen of this dwarf trumpet daffodil in the lawn of the Monasterio. On the way, we saw the nodding blooms of the white *N. alpestris* growing with blue and white Hepaticas in the rather tall grass. *N. assoanus* grew in abundance along the roadsides. The snow-covered Pyrenees mountains were off in the distance and were beautiful.

There were some *N. jacetanus* and *N. alpestris* growing together near the Monasterio and I found a couple of wild hybrids; one was a lemon-colored alpestris-type with less hooding of the perianth, and the other was a very small white flower, with little hooding.

The last day, we found *N. rupicola* growing in rocks amongst pines, and just coming into flower. Further down the mountain, we found the pale yellow form of *N. triandrus* var. *pallidulus* in good condition, most with one bloom per stem. Still further down the mountain, we found *N. triandrus* and *N. rupicola* growing together on the rocks alongside the road. Here we found a couple of wild hybrids, *N. x rapidulus*, a natural cross between *N. triandrus* and *N. rupicola*. Down in the valley, *N. bulbocodium graellsii* grew all over the grass, much like violets do here.

Aside from the sheer joy of seeing the plants in their natural habitat, I also learned a few things. Since most of the species grew in rocks, that indicates that good drainage is very important. And a good summer baking probably doesn't hurt, either. I won't be so quick to remove rocks from the garden!