

Some Favorite Daffodil Books

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If it's as hot and dry where you live as it is here, it's waaaaay too hot to be gardening. Somehow, I don't find gardening in 90° weather much fun. Besides, the deer have taken care of my hostas and hydrangeas, so my shady garden is looking pretty bare right about now. This fall, when it's cooler, I'm going to transplant lots of helleborus seedlings into those bare spots. So far, the deer haven't bothered them. And I'll apply some deer "keep aways" next spring to the susceptible plants.

So instead of actually gardening, I've been going through some of my gardening books. You can always find ideas that you can adapt to your own garden from them. I guess if I had to choose my favorite book about daffodils, it would be John W. Blanchard's *Narcissus, a guide to wild daffodils*. This was first published in 1990 by the Alpine Garden Society (UK), and it is still the "bible" if you want to learn anything about species daffodils. John makes yearly trips to Spain to see the daffodils growing in the wild. Not only does his book have wonderful photos of the species, but he also gives information about the kind of soil in which they're growing. He gives good, accurate, botanical descriptions. OK, so it may be for specialists, but if you're reading this, are you sure you're not a specialist? John's son, Dan, has accompanied him several times, and has posted some beautiful photos at http://homepage.mac.com/wildnarcissus/index_0.html If you live in the UK, presumably you can get the book directly from the AGS. In the U.S., you can get it from The American Daffodil Society. (Contact Naomi Liggett at naomiliggett@cs.com)

Another book I would hate to be without is *Modern Miniature Daffodils*, by James S. Wells. It was published in 1989 by Timber Press, and I believe the only place you might find a copy these days is on the 'net as a second hand book. It is lavishly illustrated with many color plates. Jim gives cultural instructions for growing both outdoors and in a cool greenhouse, gets into hybridizing a bit, and there's a tad on diseases. The remainder of the book is filled with illustrations of most of the miniature daffodils in existence at the time.

Daffodils for American Gardens, by Brent and Becky Heath, (1995, Elliott & Clark) is exactly what the title implies. The book is very thorough, going through daffodil anatomy, culture, hybridizing, naturalizing, companion plantings, and showing. It is beautifully illustrated throughout, and even has 26 pages of color photos of Recommended Daffodils in Commercial Culture. A revision was published by Bright Sky Press in 2001. Though I've not seen the revision, the cover photo is the same as on the book I have, so I would surmise that not a lot has changed in the book.

My favorite reference book on plants is The American Horticultural Society *A-Z Encyclopedia of Garden Plants*. I've yet to look for a plant that is not included. You'll think I'm biased when I tell you I was a consultant on daffodils for the book. There is a long list of consultants. I judge a general horticulture book on what they say about daffodils, figuring if they've got that wrong, I don't much trust the rest of the book. But the people at Dorling-Kindersley went to people who knew the plants being discussed, and even changed some things from the UK version, so I figure they must have it right.