

PINK DAFFODILS

November, 1998

When people find out I grow a lot of daffodils, they ask me if I grow that “pink daffodil.” Pink daffodils? Well, not really solid pink, but pink and white, and recently some pink and yellow daffodils. The daffodil to which they were referring was the very old cultivar, ‘Mrs. R.O. Backhouse’. That was one of the very first pink and white daffodils available to the public. And it opened with a more or less yellow cup, which took on pink tones as it matured in the garden. And if you blinked, you might miss the pink coloration. These days, there are about 2000 daffodils with pink in the cups listed in The American Daffodil Society’s data bank. Some have solid pink cups, while some have just an enchanting rim of pink on the cup edge. A few even have a hint of pink in the petals. And the number keeps growing every year, as the breeders are developing deeper and deeper pink coloring in the cups.

Pink and white daffodils come in almost every division of the classification system. For pink trumpets, ‘Pink Silk’ from Elise Havens is hard to beat, and blooms early in the season. It has a rather straight cup. Most of the pink daffodils are in Division 2, which is for those daffodils with the cup more than 1/3, but less than equal the length of the petals. My favorite daffodil may be ‘Fragrant Rose’, bred by Brian Duncan, which is in this division. Some people say it has the fragrance of the rose ‘Tropicana’. It has beautiful form, and is a beautiful pink to the base of the cup. I can always count on exhibiting it, and the bulbs also multiply quickly so that one bulb soon makes a nice clump in the garden. It blooms in late mid-season.

Some years ago Murray Evans, in Oregon, raised some very deep-colored pink-cupped daffodils. Some that are now available are ‘Artful’ and ‘Personable’ in Division 2, and ‘Newcomer’ and ‘Upshot’ in Division 3 (short cupped daffodils). These still cost the price of a good steak dinner, but the color is wonderful.



Grant Mitsch, the best American hybridizer of daffodils, also in Oregon, bred what may be the deepest pink coloring in daffodils currently available. The color is so deep, that they are registered as having red cups. And they are not orange-red, either. ‘Catalyst’ (pictured) was the first one available, and ‘Amadeus’ was released this year. Newly named ‘Assertion’, from Mr. Duncan, is not yet available, but fits right in with these strongly colored pink daffodils.

There are a number of pink and white double daffodils, from around the world. Brian Duncan, in Northern Ireland, bred a series of doubles which he named for famous hotels: ‘Claridges’, ‘Grosvenor’, and ‘Waldorf Astoria’. ‘Dorchester’ may be his best pink double to date. Grant Mitsch’s daughter, Elise Havens, has added ‘Oregon Rose’ to the list of pink doubles.

Mr. Mitsch did not neglect the other divisions either. He bred the charming triandrus hybrid, 'Akepa,' almost alone in this division; and his 'Bell Song' was probably the first jonquil hybrid with deep pink coloring in the cup.

There are a number of cyclamineus hybrids with pink in the cup, and 'Swallow Wing' has the pink confined to the rim. The petals sweep back in the manner of a cyclamen.

An amateur in California, Harold Koopowitz, has bred a tazetta hybrid with appleblossom pink cups. Named 'Sammy Girl' in honor of his granddaughter, it is not yet available in commerce. Its two florets to the stem carry the paperwhite fragrance.

The split corona hybrids contain a number of very good flowers, most from the hand of Grant Mitsch or his daughter, Elise. I think my favorite of these is 'Mission Impossible,' but the names of the others make you want to try them: 'Choral Music,' 'Cool Evening,' 'June Bride,' 'Hungarian Rhapsody,' 'Pink Formal.' Don't you just want to put on your pink formal, go out into the cool evening and celebrate with the June bride to the strains of the Hungarian Rhapsody??



One of the newer color combinations in daffodils is yellow and pink, that is yellow petals with a pink cup. Usually the flowers are very delicate colors. The Mitsch's have given us 'Memento', 'American Heritage', 'American Shores', (pictured) 'American Frontier', and 'Oregon Pioneer'. The newer flowers have somewhat deeper colors. And Mr. Duncan has a yellow-pink cyclamineus hybrid which he has named 'Prototype.'

So these days when someone asks me if I grow that pink daffodil, I reply, "Which one?"