

AWARD-WINNING DAFFODILS

September, 1999

Since daffodil bulbs are now available in garden stores, hardware stores, and some supermarkets, this seems like a good time to talk about some award-winning cultivars.

The American Daffodil Society recognizes those daffodils which should do well in all parts of the country with the Wister Award. The award was first offered in 1985, with selected growers in various parts of the country growing the candidate. Several years later, the process for reviewing candidates was changed; and now a panel of growers from around the country selects the candidates and submits their choice to the Board of Directors.

The criteria for the award are as follows:

1. The cultivar must be a good, floriferous grower.
2. Flowers should be long-lasting, of clean color, showy at a distance and reasonably sunfast.
3. Foliage should be vigorous, resistant to disease and frost damage.
4. Stem should be taller than foliage, strong and sturdy.
5. Bulbs should be resistant to basal rot and not prone to splitting up.
6. Though the cultivar might be of show quality, emphasis would be on performance in the garden.
7. Cultivar should be readily available.

The first recipient of the Wister Award was 'Stratosphere', a jonquil hybrid with yellow petals, and whose cup color varies from yellow to orange, depending on the climate. 'Stratosphere' usually has two or three florets to the tall stem. It was bred in Oregon by the late Grant E. Mitsch, and blooms late in the daffodil season.

The award went in 1987 to 'Accent', another bred by Grant Mitsch. 'Accent' is a large-cupped flower with clean white petals and a deep salmon-pink cup. It is a strong and vigorous grower, sure to make a splash of color in the garden. Look for this at your garden center.

No awards were given again until 1992, when the award went to 'Ice Follies'. This large flower was bred in Holland by the firm of Konynenburg & Mark. It has white petals, and opens with a light yellow cup. Over time, the expanded cup becomes white, and has the added bonus of a frilled rim.

In 1993, the award went to 'Sweetness', another jonquil hybrid. 'Sweetness' often comes with only one smallish bloom per stem, occasionally with two, but it sends up lots of bloom stems. It has a fragrance that lives up to its name. This all yellow flower blooms early in the daffodil season, and was bred in England by R.V. Favell.

'Ceylon' was the recipient of the award in 1994. Bred by J. Lionel Richardson in Ireland, this large-cupped daffodil has yellow petals with a cup that is variably orange or red, depending on the climate. The flowers are long-lasting, reasonably sunfast, and held above the vigorous foliage. It blooms relatively early in the daffodil season.

The award went to 'Salome' in 1995. This large-cupped daffodil is another bred by J. Lionel Richardson of Ireland. It has clean white petals with a light glowing pink cup with a yellow a rim. On opening, the cup has yellow overtones, but soon turns to a soft pink. Look for this one at your garden center.

'Peeping Tom', a yellow cyclamineus hybrid with swept back petals was the winner in 1996. Bred in England by P.D. Williams, it is an early season flower, and it stands up well to the vagaries of weather.

In 1997, another yellow cyclamineus hybrid won top honors. This time it was 'Rapture', with petals swept back almost 180 degrees. 'Rapture' is another bred by Grant E. Mitsch of Oregon. This one blooms very early in the daffodil season, and is a good one for the front of the border.

The award winner for 1998 was bred by William Pannill of Martinsville, Virginia. Mr. Pannill is the foremost amateur daffodil breeder in the United States. His winning flower, 'Intrigue', is a reverse-bicolor jonquil hybrid. "Reverse-bicolor" means the petals are yellow and the cup white, instead of the other way around. 'Intrigue' usually has two or three blossoms on a stem, and blooms late in the daffodil season. I've seen this listed in Dutch catalogs, so look for it at your garden store.

'Tripartite', a charmer bred by Richard Brook in England, usually has two or three yellow split cup daffodils on a stem. It's the only named split-corona daffodil I know that comes with multiple blooms on a stem. It is the recipient of the award for 1999.

Look for some of these flowers at your garden center store when you buy bulbs this fall. For more award-winning daffodils, check the RHS homepage <http://www.rhs.org.uk>. Look for narcissus which won the AGM (Award of Garden Merit).