

SOME FAVORITE DAFFODILS—THIS WEEK!

April, 2000

I think it's very hard to choose a favorite daffodil. It changes from season to season, and sometimes day to day. I've said on more than one occasion that 'Fragrant Rose' may be my favorite daffodil. It's pink and white, a combination I like. But it blooms late in the season. So right now, today in mid-March, my favorite daffodil is probably 'Prologue'. It's an older white and yellow trumpet, and is always among my first standard daffodils to bloom. Here in the Cincinnati area, we usually get some warm days in February or March, and then it gets cold again. 'Prologue' opened its blooms in the first spell of warm weather here, and it has endured several frosty nights since, when temperatures have gone into the low 20s and the magnolias all turned brown. It stands up the next day, strong and proud. I've had it for many years. I don't know where you might purchase it these days, but if you can find it, try it. I think you'll like it as much as I do. It was bred by Grant Mitsch in Oregon.



Another early-blooming favorite is 'Honeymoon' (pictured). This is a pale lemon trumpet daffodil bred by Murray Evans in Oregon. A clump of it is in bloom on the south side of a boulder in my front yard. It has been there almost a dozen years, and continues to do well. But on the frosty nights, the stems weren't strong enough to hold up the flower, and about half of them now have broken stems.

One that is fairly new to my garden, but is fast becoming a favorite, is the yellow trumpet, 'Habit.' This one has form good enough that it would take prizes in a show—if there were any shows this early in my area. Bred by David

Jackson in Tasmania, it has now settled down to life in the Northern Hemisphere.

There are some miniatures which reliably bloom even earlier than 'Prologue.' The miniature trumpets 'Bagatelle', 'Wee Bee', and 'Little Gem' always rank among my favorites. They are hard to tell apart, so get whichever one you can. Plant them at the front of your garden, in a place you can easily see when the weather is not the best.

One of the best miniatures, and easily obtained, is 'Tete-a-Tete' (pictured). This is an absolutely charming little plant which can have from one to three two-toned yellow blooms per stem. It has probably caused more discussion among daffodil judges than any other daffodil. Some say it should only be shown with two florets, because they think the name is a play on words which would indicate two florets. Other judges disagree.



When it comes with three florets, I think it begins to look a bit crowded. It has won numerous awards in Britain, both for growing in pots, and for growing in the garden. It must surely be Alec Gray's most successful plant, and is grown by the ton in Holland. You can buy the bulbs in the fall, and you can buy pots of bulbs in bloom at the grocery store in the spring. After these pots are done blooming, you can plant the bulbs in your garden where they should give pleasure for years. Sometimes they need an extra year to recover before blooming again, but bulbs from a pot my daughter gave me last year has one bloom this year.



Another favorite daffodil which I grow in my coldframe because the foliage comes up in early winter is *N. assoanus*. This is a miniature species daffodil which has several little golden yellow fragrant one-inch blossoms on each stem. Usually by the time this is done blooming, there are some blooms coming outdoors on other cultivars. *N. fernandesii* var. *cordubensis* (pictured) is similar, but grows well in the open.

'Falstaff' is a yellow and orange large-cupped daffodil which is one of the first with orange to bloom. It is relatively sunproof, multiplies at a good rate, and is good year after year. It was bred in Ireland by Lionel Richardson, and registered in 1960.

I wonder what my favorite will be next week?