

A Strange Daffodil Season

May, 2000

Without a doubt, this was the strangest daffodil season I can remember. It began early, in February, and we never had a heavy frost, or even a cold spell, to slow things down. As I write this on May 1, there are no daffodils left to bloom in my garden. Usually I can find blooms to mid-May and later. Our local daffodil group decided to have a "late" show this year, in addition to one at the regular time, and most of the blooms on display on April 29 came out of our refrigerators! Some blooms had been refrigerated for 2-1/2 weeks. Fortunately, friends came from further north and east, and so we had a nice display for the public coming to the show.

I did a little traveling in late March with some daffodil friends, expecting to see most of my own daffodils after I returned home. We flew in to San Francisco, and then traveled up the coast visiting daffodil shows and daffodil growers, with our final destination being the national convention of The American Daffodil Society in Portland Oregon. The convention was designated a World Daffodil Convention, and was hosted by the Oregon Daffodil Society. If you have a favorite flower, or special hobby interest, joining the national society for that flower or hobby can be lots of fun. You not only learn about your hobby, but you meet other people who share your interest, and you can make life-long friends.



We stopped at Nancy Wilson's garden in Garberville, California. Nancy grows and sells miniature daffodils. Then we stopped in at Norman Thompson's mountaintop garden (pictured) outside of Kneeland,

California. Norman and his wife, Lori, grow thousands of daffodils just for their own pleasure. The daffodils had an ethereal beauty about them in the morning fog. In his spare time, Norman has also built his own small helicopter. He says it's great for going to secluded beaches.

Another person we visited on our trip was Walter Blom, of Albany, Oregon. Walter is retired now, but is still working with daffodils. He is segregating the various forms of *N. rupicola*. He has small ones, very small ones, some with prostrate leaves, some with upright leaves all growing happily in his greenhouse. Hopefully these will one day be made available to gardeners. Walter has also been working with *N. bulbocodium*. *N. bulbocodium* is a diploid, but Walter has developed some hexaploids. You can see the difference in size and number of bloom scapes in the accompanying photo. The pot with normal-sized flowers is on the left, and the pot with the hexaploids is on the right. I thought these were amazing plants!



Prior to the convention, we visited the fields of Steve Vinisky, doing business as Cherry Creek Daffodils, in Sherwood, Oregon. With Mount Hood off in the distance, we roamed the fields admiring Steve's hybrids as well as those of other growers. It had been cold in Oregon, and not a lot of daffodils were in bloom, but I did note a little miniature which Steve is going to name 'Smidgen' that I thought was quite charming.

Our final visit prior to the convention was to the fields of Elise and Dick Havens who operate Grant Mitsch Daffodils which was begun by Elise's parents. Here we could see row upon row of the cultivars listed in the catalog, as well as the newest hybrids. Here, too, one could see cultivars originated by David Jackson in Tasmania. For those who choose not to browse the fields, a display is set up in a garden shed. Even if the weather is rainy or cold, visitors can still enjoy the colorful blooms. The flower here which I returned to again and again was a little cyclamineus hybrid still under number: 2U26/2. This little reverse bicolor has a very white cup and a good clear yellow perianth, making a startling contrast.



Then it was on to the World Convention where we had the opportunity to meet enthusiasts from around the world. There were programs on hybridizing daffodils, on historic daffodils, and on miniature daffodils. One program compared the judging systems in various countries; judges from the various countries judged the same flowers independently, using the criteria they use in their home country. We've always said that we use different methods to get to the same result, and this program proved it. All the judges placed the flowers in the same order. We also had the opportunity to hear John Blanchard, from England, tell of his journeys to Spain, the home of daffodils. With the show, the social activities, the tours to daffodil growers, and the wonderful organization by the Oregon Daffodil Society, the convention was a resounding success.

So then it was home to see my own daffodils—but a great many had bloomed while I was away. Luckily, though, I had seen beautiful daffodils in a climate which suits them perfectly. And a completely different group of daffodils made the trip to local shows.