

## Dutch Bulbs are Now at a Store Near You!

September, 2000

Have you seen the ads? Labor Day brings ads for Dutch bulbs, which are now available at local garden stores and discount stores. And bulbs ordered from catalog sources will begin to arrive soon as well. I'll be watching for the mailman, to see if he has any little boxes for me. It's always exciting to open the box to see what little "goodie" has been added as a "thank you" to my order. Most specialist growers do this, and it's fun to see what they've included.

But if you haven't ordered from catalogs, and it's almost too late to do that now, check out the local garden stores. While the number of cultivars will not be as large as that in a catalog, you can still find some nice bulbs to add to your garden. It's also possible to order bulbs online, and you can still do that, but do it soon. Many of the mail order people can be reached online.

The September 2000 issue of *Consumer Reports* had an article on bulb quality. Master Gardeners around the country planted nearly 6500 bulbs, comparing the performance of the same cultivar from various sources. The daffodils they tested were 'Dutch Master', a big, bold, yellow trumpet daffodil; and 'Salome', a white and pale pink large-cupped daffodil. 'Salome' is an American Daffodil Society Wister Award Winner (for garden excellence), and should do well in all parts of the United States. It sometimes has a bit of yellow around the edge of the cup. They tested daffodil bulbs from 15 catalog sources and seven retail sources. In overall ratings, for tulips, crocus, and daffodils tested, John Scheepers mail order catalog got the highest rating; for daffodils, Dutch Gardens got the top rating.



When selecting bulbs for your garden, choose a variety of cultivars. Read the information provided regarding blooming time, and make selections to give you a longer blooming season. Generally the yellow trumpets bloom ahead of the pink and white large-cupped ones; and those in Division 3, short-cupped daffodils, bloom even later. These are more closely related to *N. poeticus*, or Pheasant Eye daffodils. And don't forget to add a few miniatures as well. 'Hawera' or 'April Tears' (pictured) are sometimes offered locally. These have 3 to 5 dainty bell-shaped, yellow, flowers on a stem, and bloom late in daffodil season. They are very similar in appearance, and often bulbs marked 'April Tears' turn out to be 'Hawera,' but they're equally delightful in the garden. They like a dry location over the summer, though.

We're beginning to see bulbs which were bred by the American, Grant Mitsch, showing up in the Dutch trade. Look for 'Accent', another Wister Award winner,

with good pink color. And by all means, do try some of the cultivars which come with multiple blooms per stem: 'Quail' is a lovely yellow jonquil hybrid with two or three blooms per stem which will bloom later in the season. I've also seen 'Pipit', another late one, in local stores. This one is a "reverse bicolor" which means that the petals are yellow and the cup is white. 'Pipit' also has a nice white halo where the petals join the cup. And the little 'Jetfire', a cyclamineus hybrid with swept-back yellow petals with an orange cup, is a bright beginning to the season.

Another Wister Award winner to look for locally is 'Ice Follies'. This is a large-cupped daffodil with white petals and a cup that opens yellow and gradually fades out to white. This one stands up in adverse weather very well.

When you're selecting bulbs, either pre-packaged or loose in bins, give the bulbs a little squeeze, and never buy soft bulbs. That's a sign of an unhealthy bulb. And if you're selecting from a bin, choose nice firm double-nosed daffodil bulbs. They have two growing points and might give you two blooms next spring. Some bulbs naturally make smaller bulbs, and some species hybrids tend to make rounds. In that case, choose the largest rounds.

Whether you buy just a single bulb of several cultivars, or prefer the look of a group of one kind, is certainly a matter of choice. But if you buy just a single bulb, try to tuck them here and there among other plants rather than in a row like so many soldiers on parade. There's nothing wrong with buying only one bulb—most specialist growers do just that. That one bulb will grow into a clump before you know it.