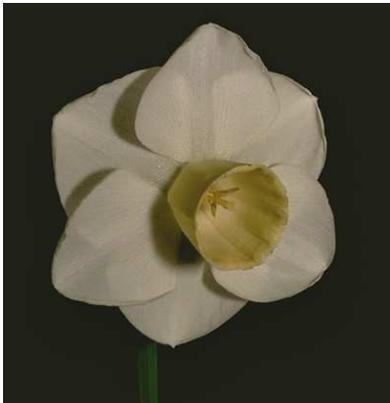


What a Short Season!

May, 2001

Well, what can I say about this season except that it must have been about the worst daffodil season I can remember? Yes, I know, we daffodil growers always complain about the weather—it's too hot, it's too cold, it's too wet, it's too dry . . .but I really think this was the worst. When I left on April 4 for the American Daffodil Society convention in Louisville, there were about a half dozen flowers open in my garden. When I returned on April 8, half the daffodils in my garden were in bloom! We had temperatures in the 80s, and flowers were opening quickly—and dying almost as quickly! Hot winds battered the blooms and tore the petals. Blooms had to be cut just as they were opening and brought inside to enjoy, or they would quickly wilt away. So what is usually a six to seven week blooming period was compressed this year into a two-week period. Well . . . there's always next year!!

There were some interesting blooms at the National Show in Louisville, and the one that seemed to get the most attention was a jonquil hybrid, two blooms on the stem, with a dark pink cup and a definite light pink in the petals. It was bred by Sid Dubose in California, and this was the first year it bloomed. It will be interesting to see if the color is stable, or whether it was just a seasonal variation.



A flower that was impressive in my garden in this terrible season was 'Geometrics'. This, too, was bred by Sid Dubose, and was the winner of this year's Pannill Award. This award is given to an American-bred flower which has done well at shows, having won either a Best Bloom Award or the Best Vase of Three Award over the past five years. It's a large-cupped daffodil with a white perianth and yellow cup; its precise form earned it the nickname of "Cookie Cutter" in the field. It has proven its show-worthiness, but it is also a wonderful flower in the garden, with the bloom held up above the foliage on strong, sturdy

stems. And it held up in the hot weather better than most.

Even in a dreadful season, there are compensations. Several first-blooms appeared in my seedling beds this year. One was a jonquil hybrid with orange tones in the perianth and a deep orange/red cup, two blooms to the stem. Another was an intermediate sized double with white petals interspersed with segments of pinkish yellow. It was a cross of a jonquil hybrid with a pink and white double, and it has a delightful jonquil perfume. One shouldn't get too excited by first blooms, but if this repeats its performance in coming years, I will be well pleased.



Another flower which impressed me this year was 'Cavalryman.' This short-cupped flower with a white perianth and deep red cup was bred in Northern Ireland by Brian Duncan, and it has been in my garden for four years. The blooms this year were every bit as large and colorful as they grow in Northern Ireland, which is amazing, since weather and growing conditions are so different.



With such a short blooming season, I've had time to examine the foliage closely and have dug some bulbs which were not doing well. If the foliage is dying down sooner than those daffodils around it, that's suspicious. Dig the bulb, and very likely you'll find the bulb's not healthy. It may be rotting, or it may have poor root growth. Also, if you find foliage that has yellow striping from the tip to the base, dig the bulb and throw it away. It's infected with yellow stripe, and there is no cure. These nice warm, sunny days are when the bulb flies appear. Similar in appearance to bees, they land on the foliage, not the flowers. You'll notice their loud humming as well. A well-placed stream of Raid Wasp and Hornet Killer will take care of them, but it will also damage foliage. Other, more potent chemicals were available in the past, but no longer. Some enthusiasts try to catch them in butterfly nets, or swat them with a fly swatter. Kill them however you can.

I said at the beginning that my flowering season was over. Well, that's not exactly right. I still have 'Baby Moon' in bloom. This miniature yellow jonquil hybrid, which is available at garden stores in the fall, is always among the last to bloom. Blooming when all else is gone, its cheery face and wonderful fragrance will delight you . . . and have you saying, "I can't wait until next year."