

Daffodil Season is Here!

April, 2002

Some miniature daffodils have been blooming here since the end of February, and I bring a few indoors now and then. I have an assortment of little bottles, and for today's family dinner, I had a parade of these little bottles going down the center of the table. A few vigil lights in between them made for an effective centerpiece. There was no problem seeing over the flowers, and the miniatures are always a source of conversation.

It looked for awhile like this might be an early season, but we've had some dips in the temperature a couple of times, which slowed things down again. The American Daffodil Society convention is being held in Northern Kentucky, and my garden will be on the tour, so I'm hoping everything will be in peak bloom on April 19. I'm keeping my fingers crossed!

During daffodil season, I walk the garden daily, looking to see what blooms may have opened overnight. This is also a good time to look closely at any foliage that is "off color." Be especially vigilant in looking for foliage that has vertical yellow stripes. That indicates the plant has virus, and there is no cure. You have to dig the bulb and destroy it. Don't put it on your compost pile. It goes in the trash! I noticed that a few bulbs of a new miniature look infected, so they will have to go. I'll probably also write the supplier, so they can check their stocks more carefully. The horizontal yellow stripes that occasionally show up are not viruses, but are caused by changing temperatures and growth spurts. When the temperature gets warm suddenly, the plant puts on a growth spurt, and often the new foliage will look yellow. Then it gets cold again, and the growth spurt slows down to normal, and you're left with the horizontal yellow stripe. Some foliage has been damaged by the sub-freezing weather we had a couple times. At first it looks wilted, but as the season progresses, it may recover; or it may turn white, then brown. If there's a lot of damage, I'll break off the brown parts, but if it's just a little, I'll just let it go. Usually the flowers will be fine, even with the cold. It's the stems that have problems. When it gets very cold, the bloom stems bend down to the ground, and if the stem freezes at that bending point, the flower may not stand up again. If you find buds lying on the ground, cut them and bring them indoors to enjoy. No point in letting them lie on the ground. Even the 17 degree weather we had didn't damage the blooms, just the stems.

When flowers bloom for the first time in my garden, I always pay close attention to see if it fits the description of the plant. Sometimes you don't get what you ordered! That happened to me this year. When bulbs of 'Little Gem' bloomed, it was clear they were NOT 'Little Gem.' While the blooms were a small yellow trumpet, they were too large to be 'Little Gem,' and the form was wrong, too. It's disappointing when this happens, but if you write a polite note to the grower, a reputable grower will usually offer a replacement or a refund.

I friend of mine, Dan Blanchard, is just back from looking for daffodils in the wild in Spain. He's posted some great photos of some of the species. Check his website at [website gone, 2014].

The first "show quality" bloom opened yesterday: 'Wild Women.' The fun begins!!