

Getting Ready for a Daffodil Show

February, 2004

Even though snow still covers my daffodil beds as I write this, in some parts of the country daffodils will soon be blooming. For an early "daffodil fix," you can visit The H. Nilton Adams Memorial Daffodil Field in Dodson, Louisiana, on February 29, 2004. Thera Lou Adams has planted over 20,000 daffodils. Email her at theralou@arkansas.net for directions.

Daffodil shows start in the United States in March. You can find a list of them on The American Daffodil Society's website at <http://www.daffodilusa.org> If there's one near you, you'd be more than welcome to exhibit and/or come see the show. You'll find people there to help you get your flowers entered.

Never exhibited in a daffodil show before? Maybe this is the year to take the plunge! It's easy! Daffodils are one of the easiest flowers to show. In fact, that's probably how I got hooked on daffodils. So, what are some of the things you can do in advance?

Walk through your garden frequently, looking for possible blooms to take to the show. If stormy weather, hail, etc., is forecast, you'll want to cut the flowers to bring inside. If it's a cultivar that "burns" easily, you will probably want to cut the flower when it is about $\frac{3}{4}$ open. Put the flower in water, in a dark basement, for a few days to let it mature inside. A fine spray mist from time to time would prove helpful. Flowers will grow larger if you can let them mature in growth, but cutting and putting in a dark basement works almost as well. And you don't run the risk of the flower being damaged before the show date.

Some grooming tips: most daffodils should "look you in the eye." So if the head is hanging down, you should try to gently lift it. "Gently" is relative, and you have to practice. Take a flower and push its bloom up, toward the sky. You don't want to push so hard you break the neck, but if you do it right, a bloom that was looking down can be brought up to a pose that is more acceptable to judges. The six petals (and if there are less than that, let the flower home) should preferably be flat, in the same plane. If the petals are hanging over the cup, or "hooded," push the petals back and gently massage them with your fingers.



You'll hear judges say a flower wasn't "clocked." That means that the upper and lower petals don't line up with the stem in a straight line. So, what to do? Gently, there's that word again, twist the flower head until they line up. This is a small point, but you can see for yourself how much better the flower looks. If you want to enter a vase of 3, choose three blooms that are as close to identical as you can.

Be sure the flowers are clean. Clean off any dirt that may be on the flower. You can do this with a Q-tip dipped in water. If the spot is troublesome, put a drop of dishwashing liquid in the water, then gently rub the spot. (If you've mulched, you probably won't have a problem.)

Know the names of your daffodils. When you plant bulbs, make some kind of map or planting diagram so that you'll know in the spring what you're looking at. Labels in the garden are good, but do the

diagram also, in case labels get moved by children or animals, or by ground freezing and thawing. As you cut flowers, write the name on the stem, using a ball point pen—or something that won't wash off.

The night before the show (or even as the flowers are growing), decide if you want to do any collections. Choose what flowers you want to use, and don't forget to have extras on hand in case you need to make last minute substitutions. This eliminates a lot of stress the morning of the show.

Make out your entry cards in advance. If you have address labels, or a stamp that will print your name and address, you can put them on the cards weeks in advance. Then all you have to do is put the flower name, classification, and class number on the entry card at the last minute, maybe the night before. Anything you can do in advance saves on stress the day of the show.

Then, make your entries the morning of the show, and after judging come and enjoy all the beautiful flowers on display.