

But I Don't Want to Exhibit Daffodils

March, 2004

Last month we talked about things to do before a show, but what if you just want to enjoy your flowers in the garden, or share them with friends? That's fine, too. So use the time on your daily walks through the garden looking for signs of disease as well as enjoying the flowers.



Yellow stripe is something I hope I don't see. Sometimes this can be confused with weather damage. When foliage comes up in late fall or early winter, it can get damaged by the cold weather. Sometimes the tips become yellow. Sometimes the foliage is yellow if it's been under snow cover for a long time. But in yellow stripe virus, the thin yellow lines go from the tips of the foliage down to ground level. Conventional wisdom says to dig the infected bulbs and throw them away—not on your compost pile, but in the trash. Some say that the virus is present in a lot of bulbs, but only appears when the bulbs are otherwise stressed, and doesn't appear every year. And some say certain cultivars are "Typhoid Mary's," carrying the virus but

never displaying symptoms. 'Silver Chimes' is said to be one such cultivar. As with "people" viruses, there is no cure for virus, thus the admonition to throw them away. It's said the virus spreads by aphids who feast on one leaf then another thus spreading the disease, and by the cutting knife when cutting flowers. Some opt to keep the bulbs, but watch for signs of spreading to other cultivars. Others say dig immediately. So, it's your choice. Personally, I dig immediately.

It's also a good idea to check the foliage for "spikkels," or bumps along the leaves, a symptom of nematodes. I don't think there's any disagreement on what to do with these bulbs. Get them out as soon as you can! Either treat the soil with something like Basamid or don't plant bulbs back in that location for several years as the nematodes live in the soil. You can save the bulbs, but you'll have to give them hot water treatment before re-planting. You can rig up a "home cooker" by using a hot tray of the type used on buffet tables as the heat source. Then use any container that won't be hurt by heat, half fill with water and bring it to a temperature of 112°. Put the bulbs in the water and maintain a temperature of 112° for 3 hours. The temperature will drop when you put the bulbs in, so you might want to add hot water to get it back up to 112° as quickly as possible. If the water gets too hot, add cold water. I keep the bulbs in the net bags, with the labels, as it's easier to deal with them that way.

Daffodil flies don't show up until later in the season, when it begins to get warm. You might see them flying about or sunning themselves on the flowers or leaves. They look like overgrown house flies, or smallish bumble bees. Get out your butterfly net and amuse the neighbors as you try to catch the flies! I'm not sure which chemicals are currently approved for use on daffodils to control fly, but Dursban, Cygon-E, and Dylox 80 used to be approved. **USE EXTREME CARE WITH ALL CHEMICALS**, and follow all directions on the label. Raid Wasp and Hornet Killer will kill the fly, but it will also damage any foliage it hits. You can do a lot to control bulb flies if you give your bulbs a good squeeze when you plant. If the bulbs are soft, it's likely there's a fly larva inside. You can either discard the bulb, or try to get the larva out with some sort of hook. Depends, I guess, on how much you value the bulb.