

Foliage—You Can't Cut it, but You Can Hide it

June, 2005

Is it all right to finally cut off that ugly daffodil foliage? The short answer is “probably not.” It depends where you live and when your daffodils bloomed. You have to put up with it for at least six weeks after the daffodils have bloomed. So, the foliage on the earliest ones is probably turning yellow. You can pull that off. But if the foliage is still green, then let it on the plant; it's making next year's flower.

If you've made any crosses, or if you just want to gather the seed that insects may have pollinated, watch the swelling pods so you don't lose the seeds. When the pod begins to turn brown, or when the dried flower falls off the pod, it's time to pick it. You can usually hear the seed rattling in the pod at this point. You can either plant the seed now, or wait until around Labor Day to plant it. I plant my seeds in pots which I'll sink into my coldframe in the fall. Use about half soil and half granite grit. You want to be sure the soil drains well.



Several years ago, I planted some seed of California poppies, and now they seed around and come up each year. Some of the color combinations aren't quite right—pink or red peonies fronted by orange poppies—but I like it anyway. It's colorful and cheery, so I don't worry much about the colors. Anyway, the poppies will be there long after the pink peonies have faded. The poppies have fine foliage, and it does a good job of hiding the daffodil foliage. Well, let's say it makes the foliage less obtrusive. One year I planted seed of white poppies, but most of what comes up now is orange.



Another plant that is seeding around is *Lamium* 'White Nancy'. I bought a couple plants a few years ago, and now I find seedlings coming up in different places around the garden. That's a good thing, since sometimes the plants don't survive the winter here. I like 'White Nancy' because the foliage is mostly white with a green border along with the white flower. There's also one with

lavender flowers, and foliage that has more green with a white center. The photo here shows candytuft flowers coming through the *Lamium* foliage. The flowers last a long time, and it makes a nice ground cover even without the flowers.

Now that most of the self-sown seed has germinated, I'm spreading a pre-emergent herbicide as I go through pulling weeds. This evening I sprayed deer repellent, for the second time, on the hostas and hydrangeas. So far the deer are staying away, so I'm hoping "This 1 Works" really does work!