
NCDS Newsletter



September 1997

Officers of the Northern California Daffodil Society:

President: Kirby Fong, 790 Carmel Avenue, Livermore 94550 (510) 443-3888 kfong@alumni.caltech.edu
Vice President: Mary Smith, 3910 Alhambra Way, Martinez 94553 (510) 228-6098
Secretary: Nancy Tackett, 066 Green Street, Martinez 94553 (510) 372-8083 nancyt@netvista.net
Treasurer: Anna Rawls, 973 Florence Road, Livermore 94550 (510) 449-4415 rawlsa@rest.com
Show Chairman: Wayne Steele, 1777 Spruce Street, Livermore 94550 (510) 447-5261 steelew@rest.com

NCDS Board and Steering Committee Meeting

The above officers and Northern California Daffodil Society directors Byron Davis, George Perko, and Phil Stanley and steering committee member Jan Moyers should be at Mary Smith's home at noon October 12 for an executive meeting.

Reminder about Bulb Raffle, Auction, and Potluck

The annual bulb raffle and auction will be Sunday, October 12 at Mary Smith's home, 3910 Alhambra Way in Martinez. See the map elsewhere in this newsletter. Starting at 1:00 PM we will make announcements, hold the raffle, auction some bulbs, and have a potluck. If you have bulbs to donate or can help set bulbs on the tables for the raffle, come at noon. For the potluck NCDS will provide bread, beverages, cups, plates, and utensils. You are asked to bring an appetizer, a dessert, a salad, a main dish, or a vegetable dish. There is no need to coordinate with anyone about what to bring; we always seem to have a reasonably balanced menu even when everyone brings what they feel comfortable with.

Never been to an NCDS raffle? Then you've missed an excellent opportunity to pick up quality daffodils at bargain prices. The raffle bulbs are generally worth one to fifteen dollars. We have hundreds of bulbs, and we sell raffle tickets at a dollar each or twelve tickets for ten dollars. Here's one raffle where you can't lose. How can this be? Most of the bulbs are donated by growers such as Mitsch Daffodils, Oregon Trail Daffodils, Bonnie Brae Gardens, Nancy Wilson, Oakwood Daffodils, and Brian Duncan. The choicest cultivars are put up for auction. Come, have a good time, get good raffle bulbs at bargain prices, bid it up for the coveted varieties, and help NCDS. In past years we've made about four hundred dollars from the raffle and five hundred from the auction. This plus our membership dues is the sole income of the NCDS.

Digging Soil and Planting Daffodil Bulbs

Now that you've acquired some fine new bulbs at the raffle and auction (or by purchasing them from the growers who donate bulbs to our raffle and auction), you have to plant them. In principal, daffodils can be replanted any time they are dormant. After all, most of them stay in the ground all summer; however, some varieties are susceptible to rot, so to minimize the chance of warm, wet conditions, it is prudent to wait until November after the soil has cooled down from the summer. It is also prudent to plant daffodils in a well drained soil so that water cannot stand around the bulbs and induce rot. For those of you who are just beginning to garden with daffodils, the pointed end is up. The roots grow from the basal plate opposite the pointed end(s). Miniature bulbs are usually planted about 2 to 3 inches deep while standard size bulbs are usually planted 6 to 8 inches deep. These are depths from the soil surface to the bottom of the bulb. Plant deeper if the soil is well drained and shallower if the soil is water retentive.

There are two basic ways to accomplish the planting. One is to dig individual holes for the bulbs, and the other is to dig out an entire bed. It is clearly more work to dig out a lot of dirt than small amounts of dirt; however, if you have a strong back and much energy, removing the dirt from a bed may be faster than digging individual holes. Also, digging out a bed gives you total control of bulb spacing and planting depth. This might matter to you if you are preparing a bed for landscape and want all the bulbs of one cultivar to bloom at about the same time.

If you have a modest number of bulbs, digging holes for each of them may not be onerous. If your soil is well cultivated so that you can dig easily, you have two options—a trowel or a bulb planting tool. Using a trowel, you

stab it into the ground, pull toward you to create a hole, and drop the bulb in. Bulb planting tools are almost tubular with a slight conical taper. You twist as you push it into the ground and then pull up to remove a plug of soil. Such tools vary from flimsy to sturdy with the sturdier ones needed for large numbers of bulbs or for less than ideal soil.

If you are naturalizing daffodils amidst ground cover or in unprepared soil, especially soil that has tree roots or rocks, then none of the above tools is useful. What you need is a naturalizing tool (sold by Daffodil Mart in Gloucester, Virginia) which has a 3 by 8 inch blade attached to one inch steel shaft with a heavy duty foot bar welded on. You use your full weight on the foot bar to push the blade into the ground, pull the handle back to push soil out of the ground, push the handle forward to create a hole, drop a bulb into the hole, then withdraw the tool and push the soil back over the bulb. This is the only viable way to plant a large number of daffodils in ground that is otherwise too hard to dig or which cannot otherwise be prepared to make digging easy.

Fertilizer

One of our directors suggested an article about fertilizer for daffodils would be appropriate for the newsletter. The problem of course is that the right fertilizer is the one that makes up the difference between what's in your soil and what your daffodils need. You can find the state of your soil by having it tested, but what exactly do daffodils need? The ADS Handbook unfortunately has little to say. It says a low nitrogen fertilizer is safe and can be used at the rate of one pound per hundred square feet in three applications, once in the fall, once when the leaves emerge, and once after flowering. In general, the folklore about daffodils says they can use a lot of potassium and a small amount of nitrogen. This is also consistent with material in "Daffodils for American Gardens" by Brent and Becky Heath. Recently there have been three published comments about fertilizing daffodils.

The more extensive remarks were by Mike Temple-Smith in Australian Daffodils 1996-97. His first point is that sandy soils hold less nutrients and therefore require more careful attention to fertilization. Conversely, clay, loam, and soils with organic matter which hold more nutrients permit more leeway in a fertilization program. His second point is that the pH should be between 5.5 and 6.5 or the conditions really aren't appropriate for growing daffodils. Point three is that potassium is usually the nutrient most needed, and nitrogen is the nutrient most easily overused. If you use high quality compost on daffodil beds, it may not even be necessary to use additional nitrogen. Point four is that daffodils grow better in fertile, well watered soils, so in most cases you will want to fertilize and perhaps irrigate. He says for his soil, he fertilizes once in the fall and once in the spring using NPK ratios of either 3-6-8 or 8-4-10 at the rate of 25 grams per square meter for each application. The higher nitrogen fertilizer is used on low fertility soils.

An unidentified writer in the Daffodil Society Journal spring 1997 issue said he got good results using John Pearson's formula of 5 parts superphosphate, 5 parts sulphate of potash, 5 parts bonemeal, and one part hoof and horn meal by weight. Unfortunately the rate of application was not given. At the Jackson show this spring John Pearson said he is increasing the hoof and horn meal to two parts. He says it provides the nitrogen without which the blooms will be small in size. He did not give the application rate but said he applies the fertilizer in November and March. He also recommended reducing the amount of phosphorus for beds that are repeatedly used for daffodils since phosphorus is not used quickly, and continued fertilization of the soil for daffodils will allow sufficient phosphorus to build up over the years. For California, it would probably be a good idea to move the March application up to February.

In the 1997 issue of *Herbertia*, Charles Hardman described his experience growing *Narcissus callicola* from seed. He grows them in containers in pure crushed granite sand with an inch of Supersoil potting mix as a top dressing. He says, "a little fertilizer with potassium, phosphorus, and a little nitrogen (nitrate: potassium nitrate, or calcium nitrate—not nitrite—nitrogen, if possible; if not, use what you have, sparingly) used in small quantities three or four times during their growing season will help your bulbs grow to blooming size quickly." It happens that Lilly Miller sells a product labeled Stump Remover & Potassium Nitrate with a 13-0-44 analysis. While it is not clear what else is in it for removing stumps, the directions do indicate its use as a fertilizer. For those of you who wish to experiment, try feeding stump remover to your daffodils! If you have a spectacular success or failure, you can tell the rest of us about it in a future newsletter.

In addition to the above comments, we should take into account other facts and (folk)lore about daffodils and fertilizer. As phosphorus is generally associated with root development, it would appear the optimal time for phosphorus to be available is in the fall and winter when the root system is developing. As phosphorus does not move readily through the soil, it should be mixed deep in the soil before planting. Digging out entire beds before planting gives you an opportunity to work in phosphorus at the root zone. After initial planting, phosphorus can be worked in regularly at the surface although it may take years for any particular surface application to work its way down to the root zone.

Nitrogen is credited with producing vegetative growth and, apparently, larger flowers. In our climate, the period of leaf growth is February and March with bloom time in mid March. It therefore seems that January is the optimal time to apply what little nitrogen is needed. Soluble nitrogen in mid January along with winter rains or irrigation should carry the nitrogen to the root zone by February when it does the most good. The goal should be to exhaust the nitrogen by early April when the daffodil should stop making leaf growth and should instead concentrate on photosynthesizing food to rebuild the bulb.

The role of potassium is not fully understood, but there seems to be some consensus that daffodils use a lot of it and that potassium contributes to hard, dense bulbs. (A soft bulb is not a healthy bulb.) The daffodil actually uses the food stored in the bulb to make roots in the fall and winter and to develop leaves in February. Presumably, photosynthesis begins when the green leaves appear, so potassium should be available starting in February and continuing until the foliage starts to turn yellow in May. It would therefore seem reasonable to apply potassium on the soil surface starting in January and continuing to early April.

Helen Alta Grier

We sadly report the death of Helen Grier, an NCDS member living in Yorba Linda in southern California. Helen was a long time member of ADS and NCDS and was president of the Southern California Daffodil Society. She was more than a daffodil grower and daffodil judge; she was a walking encyclopedia of gardening. She had hoped to revive the now dormant SCDS, but it now appears that SCDS as we knew it will fade from the scene.

Do You Have Space to Lend NCDS?

As the SCDS disbands and disburses its assets, it will donate its staging properties to NCDS. These are the test tubes, wood blocks, and stands needed to hold a daffodil show. This is a most welcome contribution to NCDS as it will allow us to stage shows on two consecutive weekends without scurrying to cart properties immediately from one show to another. The catch is that NCDS will need more storage space. Bob Spotts has graciously stored our existing properties in his garage without charge to NCDS for the last several years. Is there anyone else who could store another set of properties? It would be about two cubic yards in volume but certainly not more than one van load since we will drive down to southern California and bring the materials back in one van. If you can help, please contact NCDS president Kirby Fong. If there are no volunteers able to house the entire set of properties, we will bring them to the fall bulb raffle and auction where we can divide the responsibility so that multiple volunteers can take just a couple boxes each.

NCDS Members at the Corvallis Show

What used to be the Albany, Oregon show moved to the Payless Drug Store in Corvallis due to the unavailability of the Linn Country fairground building where the show used to be held. Here are the ADS awards won by NCDS members.

White Ribbon: Kirby Fong – Carib Gipsy

Mini Gold Ribbon: Jeanie Driver – Kokopelli

Mini White Ribbon: Jeanie Driver – Kokopelli

Purple Ribbon: Stan Baird – pink collection containing Havens LL20-25, Eastern Promise, Rainbow, Algarve, Piano Concerto

Lavender Ribbon: Nancy Wilson – Crevette, Pixie's Sister, Clare, April Tears, Rikki

Red-White-Blue Ribbon: Stan Baird – Piano Concerto, Prism, Saucy, Suave, Gull

NCDS Members at the Hillsboro Show

The last show of the season on the Pacific coast was in Hillsboro, Oregon April 12-13 at the Washington County fairgrounds. ADS awards won by NCDS members were:

Gold Ribbon: Steve Vinisky – Killearnan

White Ribbon: Jeanie Driver – Winged Flight

Mini Gold Ribbon: Jeanie Driver – Stafford

Mini White Ribbon: Jeanie Driver – Stafford

Miniature Container-Grown Award: Jym Gibson – Minnow

Lavender Ribbon: Jeanie Driver – Clare, Kokopelli, Sun Disc, Three of Diamonds, Segovia

Maroon Ribbon: Nancy Cameron – Young American, Suede, Lemon Brook, Pipit, Wasco

Green Ribbon: Jeanie Driver – Mobjack Bay, Gracious Lady, Scipio, Tynan, Wendover, Elixir, Rimski,

Explosion, Duncan 1484, Winged Flight, Intrigue, Rosebank

Quinn Award: Steve Vinisky – Sabre, Cherrygardens, Gin and Lime, Berceuse, Ahwahnee, Doctor Hugh, Evesham, Nancy Reagan, Merlin's Castle, Timolin, Cotton Candy, Pacific Rim, Clouded Yellow, Killearnan, Flying Colours, Thisbee, Rory's Glen, Carncairn 1-12-82, Roberta Watrous, Indian Maid, Vinisky 92-72-17, Jovial, Vinisky 92-118-4, Intrigue

NCDS Members at the ADS National Show in Jackson, Mississippi

Because the national show was in mid-March at the peak of the northern California season, NCDS members were able to take some very fine blooms to the show. There are some international collection awards at the national show in addition to the ADS awards we typically see at local shows.

Gold Ribbon: Kirby Fong – Hambleton

Mini Gold Ribbon: Nancy Wilson – Moncorvo

Mini White Ribbon: Bob Spotts – Kokopelli

Historic Daffodil Award: Kirby Fong – *N. jonquilla* 'Minor Plenus'

Rose Ribbon: Bob Spotts – seedling 97-357-1

Red-White-Blue Ribbon: Miss Prim, Nob Hill, Bryce Canyon, Williamsburg, Pops Legacy

Throckmorton: Kirby Fong – Radiant Gem, Glasnevin, Casterbridge, Geometrics, Hoopoe, Netherwood Marsh, Hambleton, Conestoga, Quantasia, Bright Spot, Pacific Rim, Rising Star, Capree Elizabeth, Phebe, Moon Fairies

Quinn Award: Bob Spotts – Spotts 89-51-1, Spotts 91-31-1, Spotts 91-40-1, Spotts 88-72-1, Spotts 95-201-3, Spotts 92-16-1, Spotts 97-063-1, Spotts 97-310-1, Spotts 97-183-1, Spotts 97-309-1, Spotts 89-61-1, Spotts 97-031-1, Spotts 97-073-1, Spotts 97-021-1, Spotts 88-58-1, Spotts 97-089-1, Spotts 97-357-2, Spotts 97-057-2, Spotts 97-320-1, Spotts 96-48-1, Spotts 97-057-1, Spotts 97-043-1, Spotts 92-51-1, Spotts 97-357-1

Olive Lee Trophy: Bob Spotts – Spotts 97-357-1

English Award: Kirby Fong – Hambleton, High Seas, Goldhanger, Netherwood Marsh, Neon Light

Carncairn Trophy: Kirby Fong – Gold Bond, Glasnevin, Barleywine, Merida, Celtic Gold

Australian Award: Kirby Fong – Pieman, Bonus Bond, Pink Delight, Theorum, Radcliff 42/84

New Zealand Award: Stan Baird – Fairy Charm, Phillips 77-21-1, Red Mantle, Trelay, Springston Charm

Wister Awards

While the American Daffodil Society is devoted primarily to the growing and showing of the finest exhibition cultivars, it also recognizes that most people are interested in daffodils for garden use. Several years ago it started the Wister Award to recognize daffodils of garden merit. The winners so far have been 1990 Accent, 1991, Stratosphere, 1992 Ice Follies, 1993 Sweetness, 1994 Ceylon, 1995 Salome, 1996 Peeping Tom, and 1997 Rapture. Accent happens to be a pink cup cultivar. As it has been around for a while, there are sufficient quantities that you should be able to buy it for less than a dollar per bulb. Salome is readily available. Its cup starts out yellow, but then the middle and lower part gradually turn pink, leaving yellow only on the rim of the cup. Ice Follies is probably the most commonly available daffodil in this group. It seems to be able to grow everywhere, and that makes it a good garden flower. Stratosphere and Sweetness are jonquil hybrids and will typically have two or three small florets rather than one big bloom. Stratosphere earns its name by being very tall. Ceylon dates from the 1940s and is supposed to have an orange cup. In the mild winter climate of California only the rim of the cup is going to be orange. It is a sturdy, weather resistant cultivar which has been used in breeding many of the newer orange and red cup daffodils. Unfortunately, it is not widely stocked. Peeping Tom and Rapture are both cyclamineus daffodils, small blooms with petals swept back like a cyclamen bloom. Rapture also happens to have good show form and is a winner at shows as well as in the garden. Incidentally, Sweetness has done quite well winning the Historic Daffodil ribbon at several daffodil shows this year.

A National Daffodil Show in California?

For those of you who did not get the electronic mail Bob Spotts sent to some of the NCDS members, we summarize an idea which has just been raised to NCDS. Kautz Ironstone Vineyards in Murphys (in the Sierra Nevada foothills) is completing a convention center and plans to add a hotel. They are considering developing an annual spring flower festival, and the daffodil is one candidate as the focal point. So the question is, "How about holding the ADS national show there in 2004?" This means NCDS has to do most of the organizing work to plan and organize a program to entertain about 200 registrants. NCDS members should also plan to enter a lot of flowers in the show too! Yes, there will be logistical problems, but there may be opportunities to emphasize the landscape and garden use of daffodils. Also, the Mother Lode country offers a distinctly different scenery than the downtown hotel locations where most national daffodil shows have been. How do you feel about hosting a national daffodil show? Contact Bob Spotts with your reactions. He is at 409 Hazelnut Drive, Oakley, CA 94561, (510) 625-5526, rspotts@netvista.net.

The 1998 Daffodil Shows

The NCDS principal show will once again be in Livermore at Alden Lane Nursery. The dates are March 14-15. The Fortuna and Amity shows will both be March 21-22. What used to be the Albany show and last year was the Corvallis show, will be at Valley River Mall in Eugene March 28-29. The Hillsboro show will be April 11-12. Details for a Sutter Creek show are still being negotiated. The national show will be in Richmond, Virginia April 9-11. Tours to England and Northern Ireland will leave from Virginia right after the national show for those interested in attending the English Daffodil Society's 100th anniversary show.

New Intermediate Award in 1998

The American Daffodil Society has just approved a new ribbon which local daffodil shows can award beginning in 1998. It is a ribbon for the best intermediate daffodil in the show. An intermediate is a cultivar in divisions 1, 2, 3, 4, 11, or 12 with a single floret whose typical diameter is one and a half to three inches. NCDS will offer this ribbon, so now your smallish flowers have a chance to win the recognition they deserve. There are beautiful daffodils which happen to be small but not small enough to be miniature, and this award assures that they will not be neglected. Our members Jeanie and Frank Driver who own Bonnie Brae Gardens have an intermediate section in their bulb list, so you may wish to contact them to build up your stock of intermediates.

The 1997 NCDS Annual Meeting

The annual general membership meeting of the Northern California Daffodil Society was held at 8 PM Saturday, March 9, 1997 in Livermore. The January 1997 NCDS newsletter presented six proposed amendments to the by-laws, and for those who were unable to attend, we summarize the results. The amendment to split the secretary-treasurer position into to separate positions passed without any changes. The amendment to state clearly that there were two membership business meetings per year was modified to say there will be one spring membership meeting and then passed. (The fall raffle, auction, and potluck is not a general membership meeting.) The amendment to eliminate the requirement that NCDS officers also be ADS members passed without changes. The amendment to switch from one-year to two-year terms of office was modified to add that elections will be in even numbered years and then passed. The amendment reapportioning the duties of the president, secretary, and treasurer was passed without changes. The amendment to modify the by-laws to remove gender specific references to officers passed without changes. If you would like a copy of the amended by-laws, contact president Kirby Fong.

Are You Interested in Becoming an NCDS Officer or Director?

According to our recently amended by-laws, 1998 will be an election year. If you are willing and able to serve NCDS, please tell president Kirby Fong. He will appoint a nominating committee to be sure there is at least one candidate for each position and is particularly keen on hearing from someone else who would like to be president! The NCDS board is made up of directors and the officers listed at the top of this newsletter. The election will be held at the (annual) general membership meeting next March in Livermore.

Alameda County Home and Garden Show

The NCDS under the skilled management of Wayne Steele once again plans to operate a booth at the Alameda County Home and Garden show at the county fairgrounds in Pleasanton February 6-8, 1998. If you are able to spend 2 to 3 hours at the booth to answer questions for the public, please contact Wayne Steele at (510) 447-5261. Friday morning February 6 is set up time. The show is open to the public at one o'clock. For volunteering, you will receive free admission and an extra free ticket for a friend to attend the Home and Garden Show and, last but not least, you choice of a potted blooming daffodil. If all goes well, we should have pots of My Word, Erlicheer, Johann Strauss, Pasteline, Monal, Shadow Mist, Rose Amber, and several of Sid DuBose's and Ben Hager's early seedlings in full bloom plus a few miniatures.

Web Pages of Interest

Clay Higgins of Bethesda, Maryland has prepared some Web pages about daffodils. To see them aim your Web browser at <http://www.dlcon.com/daffodils.html>. Clay and his wife Fran were this area in February while he was here on business. He and his wife visited Wayne Steele and Kirby Fong, though there were few daffodils to be seen at the time. Although Clay is new at exhibiting daffodils, he is a long time gardener and took over many of the prize daffodils from his mother-in-law, Marie Bozievich, who was a great daffodil grower and exhibitor but who is no longer physically able to care for so many daffodils.

Craig Broadfield in Tasmania has recently put up a Web page for Broadfield's daffodils. Craig is by trade an antique dealer; however, he is a third generation daffodil hybridizer, carrying on the work of his father, Don Broadfield, and his grandfather, Ross Glover. The URL is <http://www.clients.tas.webnet.com.au/homepages/craigb/Leven/daffodils/Daffs.htm>. He currently lists and includes color pictures of some of their daffodils. Craig has shown some interest in helping other Tasmanian growers get their bulb lists on line, and we should encourage him and them. There are some fine Tasmanian daffodils available, and we welcome new ways make them known and accessible.

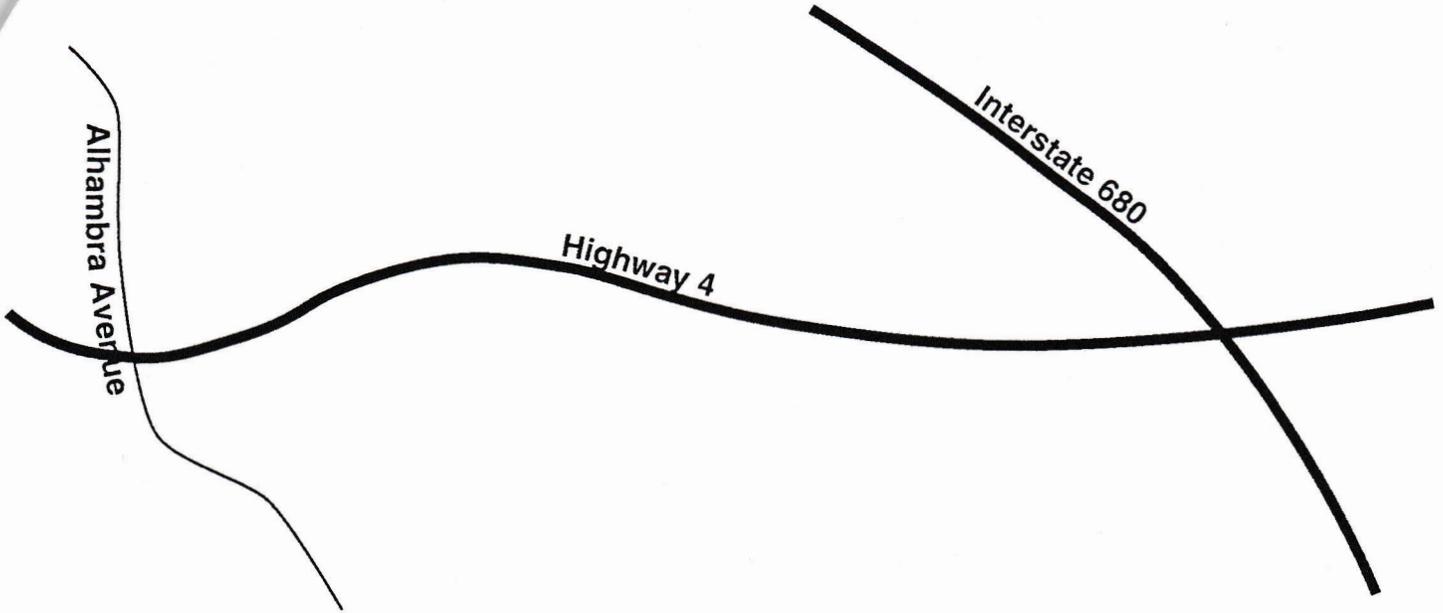
What a Deal on New Zealand Bulbs!

Koanga Daffodils in New Zealand has just sent out their 1997-1998 price list. There is a one time special whereby you can purchase \$400 worth of bulbs (excluding the 1997 new releases) for \$200 plus postage, packing, and inspection. Since these are New Zealand dollars which are currently trading for about 65 cents U.S., we're talking real bargains (even after the postage). Since their bulbs average about NZ\$10, you should be able to buy about 40 bulbs for about US\$200. You say you can't handle that many bulbs at once? Well, let's see at the raffle and auction if there are several people who would want to split such an order.

Membership Renewal

Check the mailing label on this newsletter for the expiration date of your membership. If you think there is a mistake, contact Nancy Tackett at (510) 372-8083 or send her e-mail at nancyt@netvista.net. If your membership has expired or will expire soon, you should renew now. Individual membership is \$8 per year; family membership is \$10 per year. Make checks payable to Northern California Daffodil Society and give them to Nancy at the fall raffle and auction or mail them to her at 066 Green Street, Martinez, CA 94553. In addition to your name and address, please tell Nancy your telephone number and (if you have one) electronic mail address.

Martinez



If you are not familiar with the central Contra Costa County area, the least complicated way to get to Mary Smith's house is by Highway 4. Take the Alhambra Avenue exit and go north. Turn right on Alhambra Way; there's a stoplight at that intersection and a Shell station on the west side of the street. If you get totally lost, call Mary at (510) 228-6098. Mary's house is the second house south of a little side street named Linden Lane. If you are coming through the Caldecott Tunnel on Highway 24 and are familiar with the central county area, it is shorter and quicker to go up Pleasant Hill road and Taylor Boulevard and then Alhambra Avenue. If you don't know the area well, you probably will be better off taking Highway 24 to Walnut Creek and going north on Interstate 680 to Highway 4.

