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# florida daffodil society news



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## FDS NOTES

The fall blooming season got off to an early roaring start courtesy of 20+ inches of rain. With luck, the Van Beck garden will be advertised and open to the public during the peak bloom of Nat Williams. Nat usually peaks in January, but leaves are already 6 inches tall in some beds. If you want to “see the show” at any time, call Linda (850 878-9753) and leave your phone number.

The final bills have not all arrived and payments are still trickling in, but the season officially closed in mid-November with a talk on bulbs, daffodils in particular, and a bulb sale in Bristol. To be blunt, the real need is education for gardeners in bulb culture, suitable bulbs for their area and bulbs as part of their landscape plan. A bulb list compiled by Linda Van Beck and accompanying slides has been the backbone of many FDS talks this year, especially those requested by Master Gardeners.

President Emily Millett, with assistance from Nancy Foster, are planting “leftovers” at area schools that promise to tend the bulbs. The FDS is always hoping that success can be found in school plantings. In Escambia County, the “leftovers” were purchased by the Escambia County Clean and Green organization to use as prizes for county schools that won in the organization’s recycling competitions. The kids – mostly middle schoolers – are planting the bulbs at their schools. Last year the Van Beck book Daffodils in Florida: A Field Guide to the Coastal South was donated to middle and high school libraries.

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## DUES – CHECK YOUR PAID THROUGH DATE

According to the by-laws of the society annual dues are payable on June 1 and membership will be terminated if dues payment is not received by August 31.

Please refer to your address label. The date printed above your name shows the date that your dues are paid through. If the date is 2009-May or later dates you, your dues are currently paid. You do not need to do anything. However, if the paid through date is prior to 2009-May you will not receive future newsletters unless your dues are paid. Please send directly to the treasurer, Pete Millet. A membership form is enclosed and gives his address. We hope that you are still interested in daffodils and plan to continue your membership for the 2008-2009 year.

E-mail members please note that you will receive your dues membership information by an e-mail message. If you have questions contact Mary Maud Sharpe, Membership Chairman, 850-878-9625, e-mail [wjmmsharpe@aol.com](mailto:wjmmsharpe@aol.com).

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## HISTORY LESSON

In September an interesting bit of history was forwarded to us, as a snippet from Old House Gardens.com (<http://www.oldhousegardens.com/NewsletterArchives.asp>). The remembrances of 98-year old Illinois native Mary Winks Weeks included picking daffodils for a nickel. She related how school was delayed so that children could spend the mornings harvesting the daffodils at the peak of freshness..."I was small for my age so I got put in the nickel bunch." Asked if she got a nickel for each bunch of flowers, she answered "that was for the morning's work". After the children went off to school, the women in the packing shed sorted the daffodils and packed them – 13 to a bunch – in cardboard cartons for shipment to the Water Street Market in Chicago. By planting a number of different varieties, growers extended the season from the first King Alfreds to the later blooming Narcissus type [probably *N. poeticus recurvus*]. The early bloomers were called Easter Flowers, the name still used by many local people, and the later ones were known as Mother's Day Flowers." In 1979 her brother, one of the last daffodil growers, said the daffodil business declined because "high school kids today are too lazy to pick, the Railway Express Company went out of business and there are no more street peddlers."

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## HOLLAND TIMETABLE

FDS member Lenny Kennedy brought a Colorblends catalogue to our attention. The following synopsis is based on their information.

1. How to tell when a bulb is ready to be dug: It's all about experience, i.e., feeling the roots with your finger tips. The term is Fingerspitzengefühl. You just know.
2. Maturing bulbs: Harvest starts the end of July into early August, depending on Step 1.
3. Mechanical Harvesting: Bulbs are turned and left to dry for at least two weeks on the ground.
4. Sun and Wind: The essential ingredients for natural drying.
5. Transport to Warehouse: Drying continues with bulbs placed in wooden crates.

If drying time is rushed to meet the increasing demands of American markets, the moisture in the bulb will continue to build up humidity during packaging, shipping and storage, creating an environment conducive to fungal diseases and basal rot. The phenomenon of spring bulbs for sale in Central Florida in August is a growers' decision based on shipping expediency and retailer demands.

Of major concern to the FDS is when we are told "it's not a good year," meaning not enough natural drying and a high percentage of bad bulbs. Holland-bred bulbs need to lose 20% of their water weight before reaching us. To give an example of the shipping issue we quote Colorblend "100,000 double-nose daffodil bulbs weigh about 22,000 pounds. If these bulbs need to lose another 10% of their weight after grading and packing, we are talking about 2,200 pounds (263 gallons) of water per 100,000 daffodils." If the moisture builds up in the bulb during shipping, you get mush.

The varieties recommended by the FDS are basal rot resistant. The problem the FDS has with Carleton, specifically, is not rot in the ground, but "mush" bulbs arriving in purchases. Carlton is a "tight" bulb, and needs to be properly dried before shipping.

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## A MYSTERY STORY PART II

### Le Conte–Woodmannston Plantation (LC-W)

Remember George? George Stritikus who wrote and sold pamphlets (50¢), loved old gardens in Alabama and nearby places, especially those with daffodils? Well, in the early 1990's, George was invited by Weej Broderson to speak at Goodwood Museum and Gardens. Weej purchased two pamphlets from which garden dating was extracted for the April Newsletter. After Sara and Linda Van Beck visited the Plantation over July 4<sup>th</sup>, Linda decided to return Weej's pamphlets to Goodwood's library and noticed the name LeConte while she was filing them. There it was – the reference to the list, pamphlet GAS #6 dated 1990. Sara was quickly dispatched to the Atlanta Cherokee Garden Library in Atlanta to copy the GAS #6 pamphlet. She emailed Mary Beth Evans, LC-W director, the "List of Bulbous Plants Associated with the LeConte Plantation, Woodmannston." How did George get the list? His article begins, "You will wonder how I got this list." He relates how he attended a Southern Garden History Society meeting in Savannah, was taken to the LeConte site, learned that Dr. Rogers at Statesboro College had the list and the comments/identification had been made

by Clarmont Lee, ASLA noted Savannah garden expert. Dr. Rogers and his wife had found the list while doing research in Philadelphia. Lee's comments were made in 1972. George noted that he copied the list *exactly* as he had found it and also listed Clarmont Lee's reference materials.

Sara Van Beck undertook the arduous task of updating names and identifying the daffodils. She contacted the Georgia Iris Society and other experts. Everyone pitched in to. Bulbs were located, donated or purchased and by now most bulbs on the list are planted. It was exciting to see how many bulbs were still marketed today. The list includes 36 cultivars of which 12 are narcissus varieties. As the FDS wants a public record of the list, donors, etc., this information will be added to the next newsletter.

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**Seasons Greetings**