

# YESTERDAY'S ISLAND

*Today's Nantucket*

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## Seeking Daffodils

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by *Suzanne Daub*

Daffodils come in a stunning range of colors, shapes, and sizes, and every year new variations are introduced. With millions blooming every year on Nantucket, it can be hard to pick a favorite. The most commonly recognized is the trumpet daffodil with yellow petals (perianth) and yellow cup (corona), with the cup as long or longer than the petals and one bloom per stem, but there are thousands more. According to the American Daffodil Society website, there are more than 25,000 registered cultivars (named hybrids) divided among the thirteen divisions of the official classification system.



With so many, once you decide which ones you'd like to grow, how do you discover their names? Was the pretty yellow-and-orange daffodil called American Dream or Pacific Rim? Was the double daffodil with the pink-andwhite petals called Marabou or Marmalade?

Nancy Tackett and Ben Blake have come up with the answer. These two daffodil aficionados and computer professionals have designed and developed DaffSeek.com, a daffodil photo database and search tool that is an amazing resource for daffodil growers. DaffSeek has about 23,000 named daffodils in the database and about 24,000 photos of daffodils. The website can currently be used in seven different languages. Tackett and Blake are co-chairs of the American Daffodil Society Internet Services Committee, and it took them about four years of work to create DaffSeek. Blake developed and programmed the site with a goal of designing it so that any level of gardener can easily use it. Tackett collects daffodil information and preps it for

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loading into DaffSeek. In addition, she coordinates with 286 photographers from 22 countries, then initiates the processing and photo updating. "Twenty-nine volunteers help with DaffSeek, and they're a Godsend!" Tackett commented. "One thing we never expected is how involved people would be in updating it," added Blake.

Tackett and Blake don't just work with virtual daffodils, they grow them as well. "I was raised on a farm in southwest Iowa. When we bought our first home in California, I wanted to start gardening, and daffodils came to mind," Tackett explained. "I worked with Bob Spotts, and he used to bring in big bunches of daffodils and always used to say 'you too can grow these.'" She tried and succeeded beautifully. "The daffodil universe may be a small universe, but it's a happy one!"

Blake was not as devoted to daffodils until he and Tackett began going overseas for daffodil events such as the centenary of The Daffodil Society in Great Britain. They now enter daffodil shows together and have won several Best in Show Awards. Their current favorite is Mesa Verde, a greenish cultivar introduced by friend and colleague Bob Spotts. In addition to winning awards for daffodils, Tackett and Blake were also awarded both the AMS Gold Medal and the Royal Horticulture Peter Barr Cup for creating DaffSeek and providing the world with internet daffodil resources.

Earlier this April, the couple was asked to judge at the American Daffodil Society's National Show, where they announced their newest daffodil website: DaffNet.org, which is a discussion forum for all things daffodil.

This weekend Nancy Tackett and Ben Blake will be here on-island to judge the Nantucket Garden Club's Daffodil Show held at Bartlett's Farm Saturday and Sunday, April 28 and 29. "It's our first time on Nantucket, and we're very excited."

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