

Sow There!: Kid kindness brings daffodil days to gray days

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The daffodils did not remain for very long in my classroom. Soon, our kindness helpers were headed for the halls to make joyful deliveries. (Heather Hacking — Enterprise-Record)

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When I was first learning about gardening, I sat on my living room floor in my flannel pajamas with gardening books spread out as if I was writing a term paper. Yes, this was before the internet, when we went to the library when we wanted good sources for new knowledge. I read books and magazines, and I called local experts to ask questions.

When does someone become an expert? In my mind, it is when you can remember all the correct answers to questions on a particular topic. More likely, the status of

“expert” is something that sounds good on a resume or is used to validate why someone is speaking before a large group of people.

Most of us simply learn a thing or two, and if we’re smart, we keep learning.

Sometime between then and now, I read that when growing daffodils, a gardener should clip off the flowers “as soon as you can bear it.”

I do not remember this factoid because I thought it was advice worth remembrance. Rather, I thought the idea was so silly that it was forever burned into my memory.

Why would anyone cut daffodils when they were still blooming happily?

Even a glimpse of yellow (faded or bright) is worth half a wink during the doldrums of late winter. Daffodils almost smile at you as they bob on long stems, dancing in the slightest spring breeze.

The logic behind the long remembered and long-disregarded advice is this: The less energy the plant puts into the flower, the more energy the plant will put into rebuilding the bulb for next year.

For similar reasons, it is a gardener’s sin to trim off the strappy green leaves before they wither to a dusty mass of tan strings. The plant sucks the life out of those leaves, sending energy to the storage unit below ground.

Here I am, pushing whatever historic age, and I finally realize that cutting daffodils in their prime means you have more time to enjoy them indoors.

Spirit Week

Last week, I was feeling mighty tired and a bit sorry for myself. I love all the children in my class, but sometimes you want to come home and talk to a grownup. The other day, I asked my children to raise their hands if they had a pet at home. I was the only person in the room who officially goes home to no one. To top it all off, I have no time to enjoy some of my favorite things — the daffodils that are blooming in my yard.

One dull morning, I clipped myself a bouquet of daffodils and hauled them to my classroom.

The second day, I clipped 19 flowers, and I had a good plan.

It just so happens it is Spirit Week, and we are encouraged to do kindnesses for our seventh grade sister class, which was drawn at random.

The children agreed, sharing our flowers was a bright idea.

The next day, I brought in 19 flowers. How could we divide these evenly among several classrooms? Well, we could divide them by six, giving three blooms to six different classes, and our remainder would be one.

Next, we needed to nominate and vote for where to send them.

Instead of hallway passes, I crafted “kindness passes.” I asked who wanted to run the errand.

More hands shot into the air than when I asked for volunteers to erase the chalkboard.

Select students scurried to ask our recipient teachers to borrow an empty vase. Later, a child returned with a vase containing flowers.

On the second day, I had another batch of fresh daffodils – 21 – another odd number.

This time I was smart enough to turn the vote into a data graph, and to ask the children to measure exactly 300 mL for each vase. More importantly, we spread joy up and down the hallway.

As the weather continued to be filled with gusty winds and buckets of rain, I welcomed the gray sky. I was putting my daffodils to good use. Not only that, I’m clipping the flowers at their prime, ensuring more fun for next years’ bulbs.

Daffodil Days

When I worked at the newspaper, the staff was hustled every year by good-hearted folks raising money for the Cancer Society. In March, the group sold and delivered bouquets of flowers to raise money.

The day was very much like Valentine’s Day. When everyone is receiving flowers on a certain day, you can’t help but feel sad and unloved if all you have on your desk is an empty coffee cup and some gum wrappers. Nonrecipients could pretend to work unfazed, then rush home to gorge on ice cream.

Yet, kindly Laura Urseny would break her budget, support the Cancer-free cause and buy enough bouquets to let everyone feel loved.

I did a google search for “Chico” and “Daffodil Days 2019” and found a group offering bouquets this month: <https://bit.ly/2H58WkN>.

A few fun facts

The Old Farmer's Almanac website, <https://www.almanac.com/plant/daffodils#>, had a few things to say about daffodils. I'd hope so; they've been around for more than 100 years, which is plenty of time to reach "expert status."

The sap from daffodil blooms can cause other flowers to wither. For this reason, never add daffies to a bouquet with other flowers.

Also, if your plants bloom but the flowers are less-than vibrant, add a low-nitrogen, high-potassium fertilizer to add some zip for next years' blooms.