

# Growing a love of daffodils: Becky Payne meets "Godfather of Daffodils" Ron Scamp

By [Becky Payne](#)



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*Becky meets Ron Scamp, 'The Godfather of Daffodils' from Maenporth, near Falmouth in Cornwall.*

Celebrating his 76th Birthday this month and still out in the field every day, Ron Scamp shows no signs of slowing down.

Known affectionately as 'The Godfather of Daffodils' within **growing** circles, Ron is world famous for the flowers he produces from his 14 acre field on the Cornish coast.

As a child Ron spent a lot of time on his Uncle Dan du Plessis's flower farm. Young Ron and Uncle Dan travelled the UK to exhibit at flower shows. He started growing his own daffodils when he was a teenager, and sold them locally to make a bit of pocket money.



*Ron in his field in Maenporth, Cornwall*

This year he will be attending six high profile flower shows, displaying his very best daffodils with wife Maureen and Son Adrian, who joined the family business, 'Scamps daffodils', in 2007.

As we walk around their coastal field of loamy soil, I start to realise how much work is involved in producing the perfect specimens of daffodil for weekend show after weekend show.

Scamps daffodils have received 35 Royal Horticultural Society gold medals for their displays over the years and this year have been named RHS Flower Show Cardiff Master Grower.

Bulbs from this humble Cornish field have been sent all over the world, and last year's resume includes Canada, North America, Chile, Argentina, New Zealand, Australia, China, Japan and India.

As a flower farmer, Ron is at the full mercy of the elements, and this year's weather has certainly kept him and his team on their toes.



*Ron grows all 13 daffodil divisions in his 14 acre field on the Cornish coast*

Glorious early sunshine followed by storms Erik, Freya and Gareth has not made things easy for them this year. But the romance of living a life so strongly influenced by the elements shines through.



Ron's enthusiasm doesn't wane as he shows me cultivar after cultivar of incredibly special daffodil and shares stories about their origin. It's hard to believe that he's had no formal training in horticulture. In fact, Ron's main career was in retail, managing several large concerns, before he moved to Cornwall in 1965.

He says the move as the result of a work transfer was his best bit of good fortune, enabling him to grow many plants that would do less well elsewhere. It is certainly the right climate for daffodils, and driving around the county in Spring can feel like being in a sea of yellow as different shades of the flower greet you from all sides.



*One of Ron's new varieties for this year: The Caratal, named using the Cornish word for 'castle on the mine'*

Having grown from the same place for nearly 30 years Ron says he has seen the evidence of climate change even within that period. Previous strains of daffodil that were special to Cornwall when he first moved here are now able to grow up in Scotland.

One such variety is the Tazetta, which now grows there under reasonable protection.

Ron takes great joy in developing new cultivars and just this year is releasing eight new varieties. As we tour the field, he constantly becomes animated as we stumble on one with a special story behind it's naming process.

He usually names a new variety after a nice place in Cornwall that the family visits, an occasion or a nice person they have met or know.



*The bulbs from 'Ronnie's rainbow mix' are sold as mixed daffs*

One such example is a variety of Split Corona Division 11 named after his mum, 'Max'. Ron's mum chose the flower, and it was on the front cover of his catalogue for years.

This year's new varieties include one named The Trembroath Belle, a bold and hardy flower that Ron says is named after a very special lady who sadly never

got to see it. Another is the Caratal: named using the Cornish word for 'castle on the mine'.

Skylarks are regular visitors to Ron's field, and as one sings over-head we come to a section where every shade of yellow imaginable intertwines. Ron informs me that this section is called 'Ronnie's rainbow mix' and is where they throw in the spare bulbs that are left over when planting to sell as mixed daffs. Saturated by colour, bird song and the strong scent of spring, it is not difficult to see why Ron Scamp just can't keep out of the field.