

# Today's Modern Daffodils

by Mary Lou Gripshover

**W**HAT WOULD A GARDEN BE WITHOUT DAFFODILS? Almost every garden includes them, as they are a sure sign that spring is finally coming. You probably grow some yellow ones yourself. But if you're limiting your garden to big yellow trumpet daffodils, you're missing a lot of charming flowers. Everyone knows the name 'King Alfred' when it comes to daffodils, but this old-timer dates to 1899. And if you really want the true 'King Alfred' for historic gardens, you probably have to go to a specialist in heirloom flowers. These days the trade sells "King Alfred-type" daffodils.

What's the difference between a daffodil and a narcissus? Or a jonquil? There is no difference between the terms daffodil and narcissus. Daffodil is the common, English name and Narcissus the botanical name for the same thing. In some parts of the country, any yellow daffodil is called a jonquil, but jonquil hybrids are one branch of the daffodil family. They usually have more than one floret on a stem and are fragrant. They come in the full range of daffodil colors.

So, what colors are today's modern daffodils? Yellow, pink, white, green, orange, and red, alone or in combination. A green daffodil, you say? Well, actually there is

one species that is green, and some breeders are working to get green throughout the flower, but green these days is usually confined to the eye zone, or center of the flower. By selecting cultivars that bloom early, midseason, or late, you can have flowers a good six weeks or more in the spring. When the season is right (I garden in Zone 5-6), I can have flowers from the end of February to mid-May.

I'm supposed to talk about "new" daffodils, so first let's define "new." Many catalogs will tout a flower as "new," but what that might mean is that the cultivar is new to their catalog. If you're reading a catalog from an importer of Dutch bulbs, the likelihood of actually finding something new is slim. The Dutch are masters at growing on selected bulbs for the mass market, but the growers don't sell them until they can sell them by the ton to the brokers who then sell them to various people who issue catalogs. To get something truly new, you have to get catalogs from the breeders themselves. Then be prepared for "sticker shock." Prices of new daffodils reflect the years of work required to produce this new hybrid, which may—or may not—be better than what is currently available. It takes about five years to grow a flowering size bulb from a daffodil seed. Then it is observed for several years to determine whether the bloom is consistent or an improvement over current cultivars. If the breeder thinks it's worthwhile, he/she must wait until the bulb has increased vegetatively to have enough bulbs to sell. So we're talking a minimum of twenty years of work before maybe a dozen bulbs of that new beauty are offered for sale. So when you see the prices of new cultivars, remember what's gone into it. The price will come down as supplies increase. But remember, a daffodil bulb, under normal circumstances, will probably outlive any of us. What do we pay for a choice



perennial? Why do we hesitate to pay as much for a choice daffodil bulb? Is it because we are conditioned to paying 60 or 70 cents at the garden store in the fall? For nice, but not choice, daffodils? For something there are tons of?

So, what IS new? More fertile jonquil hybrids are making their way into catalogs. While their fertility may be of most interest to other breeders, they are also very nice flowers for our gardens and shows. This fertility will allow breeders to get ever more color combinations into jonquil hybrids. Sister seedlings 'Fertile Crescent' and 'Fertile Plains' were new for 2000. Both are fragrant, and have two or three florets per stem. 'Fertile Crescent' is a deep lemon-colored flower with a white halo where the cup and perianth meet and a white rim to the cup. 'Fertile Plains' is lemon-colored with just the white halo. Both bloom late in daffodil season.

**I**ntermediate-sized blooms, while not new, are finding acceptance these days. Breeders now recognize that bigger is not always better, especially as gardens in some cases are becoming smaller. For show purposes, The American Daffodil Society defines an intermediate as a flower in Divisions 1-4 and 11 whose normal size is between 1-1/2 and 3 inches in diameter. 'Emerald Light,' 'Ticonderoga,' 'Little Tyke,' and 'Fairy Magic' are new introductions that fit these requirements. 'Emerald Light' is a precisely formed flower with pure white petals, and a cup with a broad green eye bordered by a yellow cup with a hairline rim of orange. 'Ticonderoga' is a very rounded flower, with white petals and a tiny yellow cup with a broad deep orange band. 'Little Tyke,' a precisely formed yellow trumpet bred in Australia, found its way into some American gardens this year. The breeder, who thought it too small for his

tastes, was encouraged to register it by visiting Americans. 'Fairy Magic' is a pure white flower except for the 4mm band of pink on the rim of the cup. 'Emerald Light' and 'Ticonderoga' are both small-cupped flowers in Division 3, while 'Fairy Magic' is in Division 2, large-cupped daffodils.

My favorite daffodils are the pink and white ones. And today's modern pink daffodils open pink, and in some the coloring is so deep as to be almost red. Not the reddish-orange seen in the yellow and orange daffodils, but a deep reddish-pink. If I had to pick a favorite, it would probably be 'Fragrant Rose,' from 1978. Hardly new anymore, but certainly at \$6 per bulb, it should be in all daffodil gardens where it will repay you with wonderful blooms for years. Of the newer red-pinks, I like 'All American' from 1998, 'Amadeus' from 1997, and 'Catalyst' from 1995. In these, the color is so deep that the breeder has classified it as red. 'Cape Point,' 1996, has a perfectly flat white perianth and good pink coloring.

Yellow and pink daffodils of quality are now available. This may not sound like an appealing color combination, but the colors are soft and really quite nice. 'American Dream,' 1999, is the newest in this combination. The older 'Oregon Pioneer,' 1995, is also excellent.

Reverse bi-color daffodils, where the trumpet or cup is white and the petals yellow, are much improved over the old 'Spellbinder.' The cups whiten much more quickly and the form is greatly improved. 'Altun Ha' from 1987 at around \$10 deserves a place in the garden. Its wonderful form and color contrast and strong stem also make it a show bench contender. Newer cultivars include 'Lighthouse Reef,' 1995, and 'Caribbean Snow,' 1999.

And what about a replacement for the venerable 'King Alfred'? 'Goldfinger' from 1983 would be hard to beat. Or if you want



something from 1999, try 'Golden Gala.'

If you have a computer and access to the Internet, visit The American Daffodil Society's website at [www.daffodilusa.org](http://www.daffodilusa.org). You can find a list of specialist growers there, as well as answers to many daffodil questions. Or you can email your questions to me at [DAFFMLG@aol.com](mailto:DAFFMLG@aol.com). If you don't have web access, write to The American Daffodil Society at the address below.

The American Daffodil Society publishes the *Handbook for Growing, Exhibiting, and Judging Daffodils*, which may be of interest to National Council Judges; *Daffodils to Show and Grow*, which lists classification of most daffodils likely to be in commerce or to be seen at shows, and the *Tom D. Throckmorton Daffodil Data Bank of the ADS*, which lists about 13,000 daffodils with their breeding information, classification, and other things. For more information about culture, miniatures, classification, forcing, or any questions about daf-



'Fragrant Rose'

fodils, write to: The American Daffodil Society, 4126 Winfield Road, Columbus, OH 43220. Dues are \$20 per year, and include the quarterly *Daffodil Journal*.

## Predators

**P**icture the wolf from "Little Red Riding Hood" dangerously cunning while preying on an innocent child. We've all heard the story and the message stuck. Predators are bad.

Due to this perception, predators have suffered at the hands of people throughout history. Many predators, like eagles and hawks were needlessly killed. Some, like the wolf, were eliminated from most of their range. Although some predators today are legally protected, some are still senselessly killed out of fear and ignorance.

Despite our misgivings about them, people admire predators for the same traits that have evoked fear: their speed, power, and ability to hunt.

Predators are animals adapted for catching and eating other animals. They include magnificent, powerful animals, such as eagles, foxes, and wolves. But predators also include smaller animals such as insect-eating frogs and birds, spiders, and ladybugs. Predators help to regulate animal populations like those of insects, whose numbers could reach detrimental levels unless controlled. Predators kill for the same reason groundhogs raid gardens, songbirds visit birdfeeders, and you go the refrigerator - hunger!—MO Department of Conservation



# Daffodils

## For Exhibitors and Judges

If you're going to be entering daffodils in shows this spring, or judging them, you might keep in mind the following judging criteria from The American Daffodil Society.

Condition is allotted 20 points. Condition is something you can control. Clean dirty flowers; don't enter flowers with torn petals or those that are past their prime and are losing substance. Never pull the sheath (the dry covering of the flower bud) off. Don't enter flowers with mechanical damage, i.e., bruises, tears, hail damage. And never enter a flower with evidence of disease, such a flower showing color breaking.

Form is also allotted 20 points. Form is what a flower is born with, things like ribby petals, narrow or broad petals, rolled petal edges. Flowers should have the pose typical of the division, that is cyclamineus hybrids should have significantly reflexed petals. Petals should be free of notches, which occur when the petal is caught in the cup as the flower is opening.

Color gets 15 points. Colors should be clear and clean. Whites should not look muddy. Reverse bi-colors should be well-reversed (not easy, as some cultivars are almost dead before the cup goes whitish).

Pose gets 10 points. Hybrids in divisions 1-4 and 11 should be at about right angles to the stem and "look you in the eye," while triandrus hybrids should have nodding florets that typically look down. "Axis balance" is a fine point which refers to the top and bottom perianth segments lining up in

a straight line with the stem. This is a minor point, but in close competition can make the difference between a first and second place. With practice, you can twist the flower head so that all your flowers have axis balance. (PRACTICE on a flower not going to the show is the operative word here!)

Stem counts for 10 points. Stems should be strong enough to hold the flower upright, and straight, and be in proportion to the size of the flower.

Size gets 10 points, and here the judges should be familiar with the cultivar. If the flower is typical of the cultivar, it would get the whole 10 points—an undersized flower could have points deducted. A larger than normal-sized bloom, if smooth and refined, indicates good culture.

Substance and Texture count for 7-1/2 points each. Substance is the thickness of the flower tissue, while Texture refers to the surface of the flower. Is it smooth or rough? A loss of substance that causes translucence of the petals is a serious fault, and should be penalized either under condition or substance, but not both. A flower that is thick and turgid is what judges are looking for.

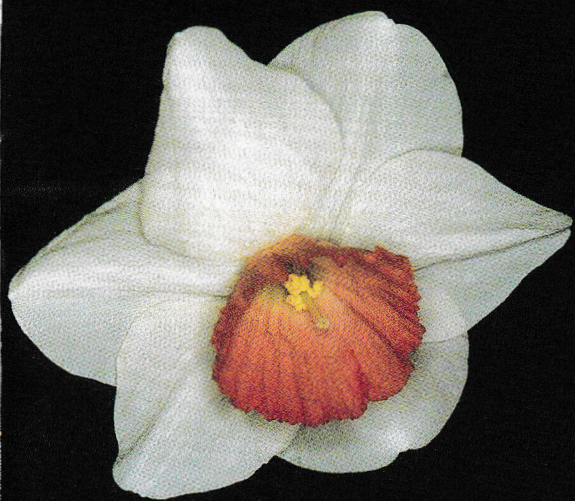
So, exhibitors, always present your flowers in the best possible manner. You wouldn't go out with sloppy makeup or clothes, so why send your flowers out that way? Present only the best. Certainly that's what the judges will be looking for.

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**I have seen the lady April bringing  
the daffodils,  
Bringing the springing grass and the soft  
warm April rain.  
—John Masefield**

**And then my heart with pleasure fills,  
And dances with the daffodils  
—William Wordsworth**





Catalyst



Cape Point



American Dream



Altun Ha