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ARKANSAS SIGHTSEEING: Daffodil festival brings big crowds to small church

by [Jack Schnedler](#) | Today at 2:19 a.m.

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Sisters Kaylie (left), 7, and Rebecca Wood, 8, of Quitman, Tx., sit in the daffodil field at Wye Mountain Thursday afternoon. The girls were visiting their grandparents in Bryant during their spring break. The daffodil field is open daily from 9 a.m. until 5 p.m. with a festival including food and crafts this Saturday and Sunday. - Photo by Staton Breidenthal

WYE — It's not exactly a miracle. But it is amazing that one of Arkansas' smallest congregations manages to stage such a popular (and photogenic) festival each March in the 7-acre field next to its rustic stone church.

The 42nd annual Wye Mountain Daffodil Festival opens Saturday and continues through March 15. It is presented by century-old Wye Mountain United Methodist Church, most of whose two dozen active members are involved in the event.

Wye Mountain Daffodil Festival

To go: Take Cantrell Road (Arkansas 10) west to Arkansas 113. Turn right and continue four miles north to the intersection with Arkansas 300. Parking available along the highway.

Information: [Facebook.com](https://www.facebook.com/WyeMountainDaffodilFestival/) (Wye Mountain Daffodil Festival's page.)

(For information on the Camden event, visit [camdendaffodilfestival.com](https://www.camdendaffodilfestival.com))

Once held only on weekends, the event some 30 miles northwest of Little Rock expanded two years ago to nine straight days. That change reflected a marked increase in visitors during weekdays, according to Bobby Younger, one of the organizers. He estimates last year's visitor total at 10,000 to 15,000.

There are reasons why daffodils remain so perennially popular, according to Younger: "They are one of the first blooms of the year. Most are a cheery yellow. They herald the new year for planting and growing seasons while reflecting on other aspects of our lives for hope in new beginnings."

The Wye festival is about as noncommercial as such events can be. There are refreshments and crafts for sale — as well as T-shirts, a nod to commerce. But there are no pageants, no contests, no music, no guided tours (although the church is open for a look around). Admission and parking are free. Visitors can buy a dozen daffodil bulbs for \$5. Taking home a daffodil bouquet is more problematic.

That's because picking flowers among the 40 or so varieties in the sweeping sea of yellow is prohibited until near the festival's end. Otherwise, the field would be bare or nearly so after just a couple of days, as Younger explains: "A lot of later visitors would be really disappointed."



A stone church, open to visitors during the Wye Mountain Daffodil Festival, serves Wye Mountain's congregation. (Special to the Democrat-Gazette/Marcia Schnedler)

So the field's entrance for most of the nine days will have a posted sign: "No picking allowed." When organizers decide that it's finally time to give visitors free rein, the signs will read: "Picking allowed." Then a dozen daffodils can be plucked for a \$1 donation.

Another rule bans dogs or other pets from the field. Professional photographers who want to shoot pictures for commercial purposes are charged \$25. In a 21st-century update, that fee also applies to photos from drones.

Receipts go to community missions, the church building's upkeep and improvements to the daffodil field. Five new varieties of the flowers, aka jonquils, were planted last fall. They'll blend into the floral panorama, which Younger expects to be in full bloom as the festival proceeds.

The Camden Daffodil Festival, as thoroughly organized as Wye Mountain's, is breezily casual and takes place March 13-14 in the Ouachita County seat 100 miles south of Little Rock.

Camden's fest will include a steak-cooking contest, music, guided tours of historic Oakland Cemetery with actors in period costumes, visits to vintage houses, games for children and other activities. Ticket prices vary by event, with some free of charge.