



COLONIZATION OF DAFFODILS

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For those growers who are fortunate enough to have an orchard or other open areas where there is plenty of sunshine, thought might be given to colonizing clumps of daffodils. The edge of a woods is another area which might be used provided there is sufficient sun to ripen the foliage, and not too many tree roots to interfere with planting and the competition for nourishment.

Since the daffodil makes its growth during the rainy season in most areas, and matures before the hot, dry summer begins, it is an ideal plant for spring color in the landscape.

Not all cultivars are adaptable to growing well under less than ideal conditions. Many of the newer hybrid cultivars are not as strong as some of the older ones which have survived for many years. I have some old time cultivars which were planted in the sod almost 50 years ago and still produce some small blooms among lots of foliage. They have received no fertilizer in 25 years.

Many years ago I started planting the surplus bulbs in an old apple orchard in drifts among the trees. As the trees died out, more drifts were added and dogwood (*Cornus florida*) and redbud (*Cercis canadensis*) trees were planted in clumps to add interest to the terrain. Today I have fifteen acres covered with drifts of my favorite flower.

It is interesting to walk among the drifts to see how many cultivars I can identify. I do not keep a record of where certain cultivars are planted, but usually the name will appear from my memory bank when I study the flowers, especially if the blooms have any particular form or color combination such as 'Lilac Delight' or 'Bushtit.'

Many times when wandering among the drifts, I find blooms which are of show quality, especially if they are not more than five years down. Often they are better than like cultivars grown in the display garden; for instance, many years ago, I planted a drift of 'Bushtit' on the south hillside just above the lake, and each year I can gather a blue ribbon vase of three from that drift.

A few years ago I planted a drift of 'Jet Fire' at the edge of the woods in a swail; they lasted only three years. Many of the cyclamineus do well and last for years when colonized; some examples are: 'Beryl', 'Roger', 'Perconger', 'March Sunshine', 'February Gold', and 'Little Witch'. They are especially appreciated because of the early bloom.

Many of the older trumpets are excellent for their strong, yellow color; examples are 'Inca Gold', 'Golden Riot', 'Goldcourt', 'Golden Cockerel', and 'Arctic Gold'. I have never been able to keep 'King Alfred' although I bought it as one of my first cultivars.

The bicolor trumpets (1 W-Y) have not been as prolific in their bloom as some other divisions. 'Birthright' (1 W-W), 'Preamble', 'Spitzbergen', and 'Countess of Stair' have stayed with me longer than some of the newer originations.

One large drift of 'Vigil' and another of 'Panache' seem quite content in the sod. 'Empress of Ireland' is another which does well, but blooms are so large that the wind tears the perianth segments badly, and their blooms do not last long.

A number of the older reverse bicolor cultivars have survived several years. 'Daydream', down about 15 years, still blooms well as do 'Pastorale' and 'Honeybird.'

There are many large cups, too numerous to mention, which make up much of the planting. A few which are old, but still such good bloomers that they deserve mentioning are: 'Easter Moon', 'Interim', 'Festivity', 'Wahkeena', 'Ormeau', 'Golden Aura', 'Amberjack', 'Chemawa', 'Velvet Robe', and 'Rubra'. 'Easter Moon', down several years, won Best of Show in Indiana recently. 'Accent' disappeared after three years.

From Division 3, 'Fairy Circle' (Brodie, 1913) has made a nice drift. 'Rockall', 'Green Jacket', 'Eminent', 'Circlet', 'Perimeter', 'Montego', and 'Green Meadows' make good late drifts. 'Reprieve' has been especially successful for late blooms.

A number from Division 4 have been colonized over the years, but with little success. 'Van Sion', planted nearly 50 years ago, blooms only occasionally, and then only as a lopsided, greenish blob. The best of the colonized doubles has been 'Sweet Music', so welcome at the end of the season, and a fair bloomer. The 'Cheerfulness' group is also very good for late flowers.

Many of the old cultivars from Division 5 have stayed with me for years. 'Thalia', 'Shot Silk', 'Pearly Queen', 'Moonshine', 'Lemon Drops', and 'Yellow Warbler' colonize well. Drifts of 'Thalia' and 'Shot Silk' add interest to the landscape, their heads "fluttering and dancing in the breeze."

The jonquilla, both cultivars and species, are very dependable. They flourish in the sod like they do along the roadsides in the deep south. In front of my tractor shed are large drifts of 'Aurelia', 'Ripple', 'Sierra Gold', 'Hesla', 'Buttercup', 'Golden Goblet', and 'Golden Sceptre'. The colonies are long lasting and good bloomers.

Division 8 is one of my favorites for colonizing because most of the cultivars produce beautiful, multiple-flowered heads which make colorful drifts. The division as a whole likes the sod and the fact they are undisturbed once planted. I have a very large drift of 'Orange Cup', down thirty years, which is magnificent each spring. When this colony was planted, I was very busy and gave my handyman, who was a Sicilian, a basket of bulbs and told him how and where to plant them. The next spring when they bloomed I discovered he had planted them a foot apart in a perfect square. When I asked him why he planted them in a square he told me he had been trained in Sicily for work in a formal garden and that was the way to plant them.

The best cultivars for colonizing from Division 8 are 'Cragford', 'Orange Blossom', 'Orange Cup', 'Geranium', 'Laurens Koster', 'Early Perfection', 'Matador', 'Aspasia', 'Sparkling Eye', 'Orange Prince', and 'Irmelin'. 'Silver Chimes' grows beautifully when planted deeply, about eight inches.

Division 9 is unique in that so far I have not found any from this division which will not colonize well, although I have not tried some of the very newest cultivars. *N. poeticus recurvus* grows like a weed, and the blooms last well into May.

The species and some of the miniatures have a place in the sod too. The jonquil species seem to thrive on neglect. I have planted drifts around the base of bluebird box posts and they flourish. The pseudonarcissus varieties are also happy in the sod.

About 25 years ago, I planted a drift of 'Mite' at the edge of the limb drip of an Austrian pine tree. I could not get them to grow well in the display garden and decided they needed drastic measures. They have bloomed and multiplied well and have been the source of prize winning vases of three stems for years. I planted surplus bulbs of 'Tanagra' and 'Wee Bee' at the outer limb drip of dogwood trees where they seem perfectly happy.

The split coronas are attention-getters in the garden; 'Hillbilly', 'Hillbilly's Sister', 'Evolution', and 'Gold Collar' have thrived on the oohs and aahs from the hundreds who visit my garden each spring.

Lastly, a few words about planting bulbs in the sod. Using a broad spade, make two cuts lengthwise and a horizontal cut at each end, then lift back the sod, dig up the dirt in the bottom of hole, remove some to proper depth, sprinkle in about a tablespoon of potato fertilizer (low nitrogen), work in to the soil, place a couple of inches of dirt over the fertilizer and set in bulbs. About three to five bulbs can go into the hole depending on the size of bulbs and hole. Bulbs should be six to eight inches deep. A series of holes makes the drift. Bulbs are never dug or fertilized again.

Foliage should not be cut until it has turned yellow, which means after July 4th. I use a tractor with a sickle bar attachment in order to mow well under the limb drip of the trees. The hay is raked and used as mulch under the trees which helps keep down weeds. The turf is mowed as needed until ground freezes. The sod is a fine winter mulch for the bulbs.