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ATHENS BANNER-HERALD

Daffodil supplants iris as Athens' official flower

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Athens-Clarke County officials recently gave the daffodil its day in the sun.

Last month, with unanimous approval, county commissioners named the daffodil Athens' official flower, replacing the iris.

Already the daffodil has become a staple on the interchanges along the GA-Loop 10. Local nonprofit, Keep Athens-Clarke County Beautiful, said they've planted more than 100,000 daffodils in the last 10 years.

The yellow perennial has found a home at on and off ramps at Chase Street, Prince Avenue, Atlanta Highway, Martin Luther King Jr. Parkway and North Avenue.

The nonprofit's mayoral appointee, District 4 Commissioner Allison Wright, proposed the resolution to change the flower. The previous flower of Athens, the iris, has held the designation since 1964.

The idea to celebrate the daffodil came from conversation with Mayor Nancy Denson, according to Keep Athens Clarke-County Beautiful Program Education Specialist Stacy Smith.

"Our executive director was speaking to the mayor and she was really excited about the daffodils," Smith said. "The idea came out of that conversation as a way of celebrating the project."

In thanks for the mayor's support for the project, Keep Athens Clarke-County Beautiful presented the mayor and city hall with a framed photo of daffodils.

The mayor made no effort to hide her feelings on the matter.

"Try to say daffodil without smiling. You can't do it," Denson said.

Denson wasn't the only one showing plenty of love to the daffodil.

Reading the resolution, Wright called the daffodil one of the earliest harbingers of spring and "a symbol of hope, renewal, optimism, rebirth, and new beginnings."

Smith, who says the long-term goal is to plant daffodils at all 11 GA-10 interchanges, noted other attributes of the flowers.

“They’re something that bloom nice and early. They don’t block traffic. They come back every year. It was just a really great plant that fit in well with the requirements,” she said.

They made progress on that goal earlier this year during January’s Martin Luther King day of service, where approximately 125 community volunteers came together to plant 30,000 daffodil bulbs on the North Avenue ramps.

According to Smith, the next batch of daffodils will be planted at the Old Hull Road ramp on Nov. 12.