

Daffodils



Smiles of spring

Madeline Kirby's smile is as bright as her daffodils.

When Madeline was a bride, she planted daffodils in her window box.

That was Fullerton, Calif.; today she's planting daffodils in Springdale.

"There's no place in the United States that grows daffodils like Oregon," Madeline said, assessing the spring crop that covered the hillside of her and husband Ernie's country home. "The moist, cool weather of the Northwest is perfect for them. You couldn't garden in California like you can here."

And garden she does.

The home they've lived in since 1969 is a study of landscaping methods, subtitled "how to make the most of a hilly spot."

He does the digging. She does the planting. It's a powerful combination.

"I can't tell one from the other," Ernie said, surveying an expanse of white, yellow and orange flowers. "The only way I know a rose from a violet is that they smell different."

That's not quite true, Madeline chided.

"I couldn't do the gardening without my husband."

She's always loved flowers.

"I can remember flowers from the time I was little," the Columbian Garden Club member recalled. "My mother loved flowers. My daughter likes them, too."

Seeing their native Orange County, California, change from agricultural to residential was a sad experience for the Kirbys.

"We watched as bulldozers plowed up the orange grove across from our house and piled up the trees to burn. It was enough to make you sick," Madeline said sadly.

The Kirbys, for now, are far away from the sounds of earthmovers as they create their personal garden spot.

Rock gardens are Madeline's specialty.

"I like miniature daffodils because they fit so well into a terraced yard," she said.

The couple didn't have a bunch of fancy equipment to carve their environment out of the hillside.

"We did it with a shovel, hoe and rake," Ernie said.

Besides the landscaped area around the house, Madeline and Ernie have a field of daffodils where she experiments with hybridizing. She estimates she has more than 300 varieties of the genus narcissus, including jonquils ("the fragrant ones"), trumpets, cups, poets and double triandrus.

"I haven't registered any yet," she sighed. "I'll get what I think is a good one and then an even better one comes along."

"There are so many, you don't know

where to stop."

Madeline has collected some prize winners along the way. In 1975 she won the Mathew Fowlds Award for the best cyclamineus, a type of daffodil. She has received the Carey E. Quinn Award for a showing of 25 different varieties at the national show.

This spring she won the silver bowl for the best three flowers in the Descanso Gardens, LaCanada, Calif., show.

She had gone to California to visit her daughter, Carol Hesse, and carried down a few flowers on the plane with her.

"My daughter teased me that I came with a handful of daffodils and walked away with the prize," Madeline recalled with a smile.

She has also won the national award for the best miniature.

"It's no bigger than your fingernail," Ernie said.

It takes five or six years to develop a new variety of daffodil, she said. Oregon boasts two outstanding growers and hybridizers, Murray Evans of the Springdale area and Grant Mitch of Canby. The Kirbys' gardens have examples of the best of both.

Madeline doesn't just raise daffodils—she judges them, too. She admits it was a bit of luck that helped her in choosing the flowers for the California show.

"I picked them when they were still buds. I set them on my daughter's patio and sprayed them with water until they opened. When they came out, they didn't have a nick on them."

Besides the daffodils of all sizes, shapes and colors, the Kirbys use iris, roses, peonies, rhododendrons and fruit trees.

"I like to use a bit of blue in my garden—it adds softness," Madeline advised.

Madeline and Ernie don't just plant without planning. She draws intricate maps of each part of the terraced gardens. She can tell you which row, which variety in each row, where every flower is located. She knows where each tree, plant and rock is.

"Sometimes a mole moves some bulbs around a bit and she has to change her map," Ernie joked.

Madeline doesn't sell her daffodils, but instead she shares them with her friends. Her flowers decorated son Earl's home in Jacksonville for granddaughter Diane's wedding.

Last week she fretted a little as the weather shifted from sun to sleet to rain.

"I was going to pick some of the daffodils for church," she said unhappily.

"See, how they look up at you when the sun comes out," Madeline said.



GOLDEN DAFFODILS are grown in profusion by Madeline and Ernie Kirby of rural Springdale. They estimate they have more than 300 varieties of the flower—which range from trumpets to miniatures.

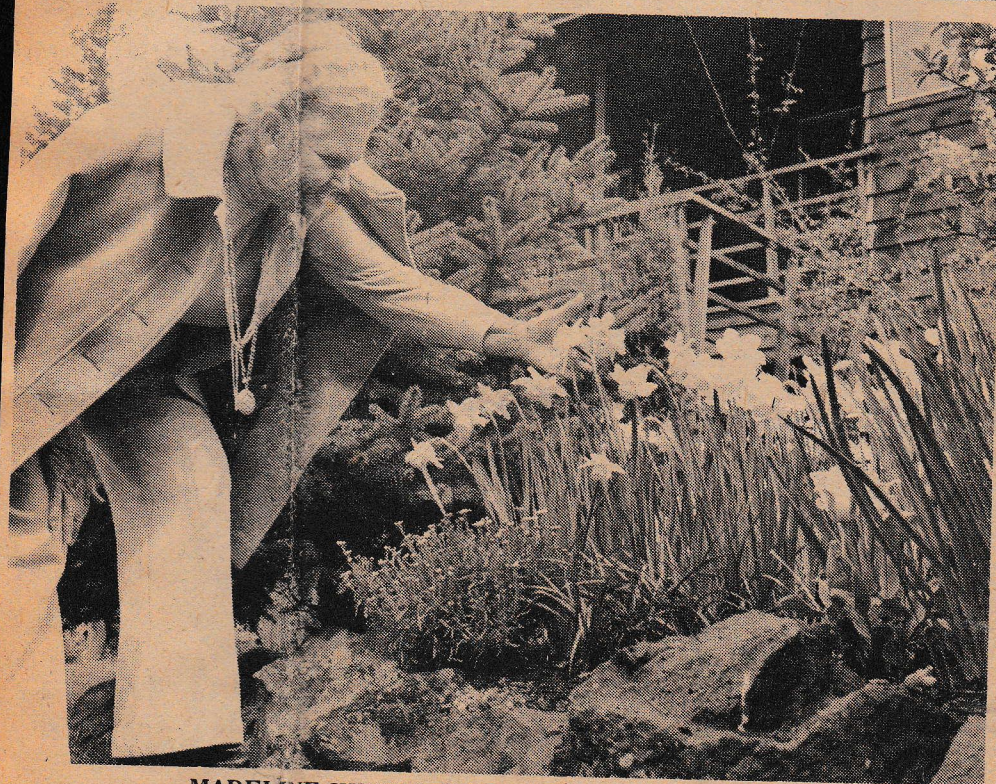
SECTION TWO GRESHAM, OREGON, THURSDAY, APRIL 22, 1976



*Daffodils grown by
Springdale couple,
bringing brightness*

*Story/photos
by Suzanne Ashmun
people editor*





MADLINE KIRBY hybridized the pink cup narcissus, right, in her backyard garden, upper right. Madeline uses size and color to determine where her flowers will be planted in the landscaped rock garden around the Kirby home, above, which she has carefully plotted and mapped with the help of husband Ernest.