



# trumpet arrival of spring

BY MARCIA WALKER

Angel's Whisper. Scarlet Gem. Fragrant Rose. Tahiti. Christmas Valley. Pacific Rim. Arctic Gold.

If the word daffodil conjures a picture of yellow, trumpet-like flowers growing in your grandmother's garden, you are in for a surprise.

Daffodils come in a variety of shapes, colors and sizes. Thanks to the work of hybridizers, there are over 13,000 varieties, according to information posted on the American Daffodil Society's Web site.

Nancy Tackett first became fascinated with daffodils as a child growing up on a farm in Iowa. Those were the big, yellow variety called King Alfred, the kind that many people think of when they hear the word daffodil or jonquil.

As an adult, Tackett became friends with Bob Spotts, a world-renowned hybridizer, who introduced her to other varieties.

"Bob would carry in five-gallon buckets of cut

daffodils of all colors and forms," Tackett said. "It was difficult to believe these were actually daffodils. I was looking for a hobby away from computers and thought daffodils would be the answer."

Actually, Tackett's growing fascination with the colorful flower resulted in her becoming even more involved with her computer. She and her husband, Ben Blake, created Daffseek, a data base listing hundreds of varieties.

For their efforts, the American Daffodil Society presented the couple with the prestigious ADS gold medal.

Tackett said one thing she likes about the flower is its adaptability. She now lives close to San Francisco, where the climate and growing conditions are much different than her native Iowa.

It doesn't get cold, and her yard is a rocky hillside, so steep that Tackett jokes about recycling

# fodils



her golf shoes for garden shoes. But one type of daffodil doesn't mind these conditions: tazettas. Tackett also maintains about 100 pots.

"Because it does not get cold here, we can grow tazettas quite easily," she said. "The down side of no chill is that we do not get the brilliant colors that others do around the country. Despite all this ... I will continue to grow daffodils wherever I live."

Indiana is well-suited for growing most varieties, in part because there are periods of below freezing temperatures, when the bulbs are dormant, which is essential for most types.

The flower tolerates a variety of soil types (although they don't like wet conditions), will grow in wooded areas (since the flowers bloom before the leaves are out) and is one of the few plants that deer don't like to nibble on.

"They are one of the best perennials for early spring," said Richard Beckort, extension agent for Jackson County. "They are as maintenance free

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PHOTOS BY BEN BLAKE, COURTESY AMERICAN DAFFODIL SOCIETY

**Opposite page:** Shindig is from Division 2 and is considered a late bloomer. **Top left:** Smooth Trumpet belongs to Division 1 and has a long cup. It is considered an early bloomer, meaning one of the first to appear in the spring. **Bottom left** Tahiti belongs to a division designated for double daffodils.



"I wandered lonely as a  
cloud  
That floats on high o'er vales  
and hills,  
When all at once I saw a  
crowd,  
A host, of *golden* daffodils;  
*Beside* the lake, beneath the  
*trees*,  
Fluttering and dancing in the  
breeze.

*Continuous as the stars that*  
*shine*

And twinkle on the milky  
way,

They stretched in never-  
ending line

Along the margin of a bay:

Ten thousand saw I at a  
*glance*,

Tossing their heads in  
sprightly dance."

—From "Daffodils"  
by William Wordsworth



PHOTO BY MARCIA WALKER

Jackson County artist Maureen Resta paints  
near a garden of Redhill daffodils.





PHOTOS BY BEN BLAKE, COURTESY AMERICAN DAFFODIL SOCIETY

**At top:** Some people believe Fragrant Rose has the fragrance of a rose, thus the name. **Above:** Haivose is a tazetta. It belongs to Division 8, with three to 20 flowers per stem. It's considered historic, dating to 1927.

as a flower gets. Nothing is completely maintenance free, but they come close."

One endearing characteristic is that unlike some other bulbs that may die out after a season or two, such as hyacinths and tulips, daffodils are in it for the long haul.

"Daffodils stay around for many years," Beckon said. "If you are driving around the countryside and see them out in pastures, you can bet there was once a home site there."

Daffodils are divided into 13 divisions, based on certain characteristics. Some varieties have just one flower to a stem; others two or three. Some come in clusters; some have a split cup. There are also doubles, with a clustered cup and petal.

When the flowers begin to bloom depends on many factors, but growers have identified varieties that bloom early in the season, in mid-season and late season.

In this area, one variety blooms in mid-March, and other kinds follow, continuing well into April.

A good way to become acquainted with the flower is to visit a show, where daffodil connoisseurs exhibit the effort of their hard work.

There are local shows, where growers compete in different categories, and the ADS sponsors a national show, which brings people from around the country, including Tackett.

Those participating in a national show face an additional challenge: transporting their flowers.



PHOTO BY BECKY FOX MATTHEWS, COURTESY AMERICAN DAFFODIL SOCIETY  
Redhill does well as a landscape flower in a natural setting.



"Yes, I've had to learn how to 'fly' with daffodils," Tackett said. "Many people do this in a much grander scale than I. I admire them for their abilities and hard work to bring so many beautiful blooms to the conventions."

This year, , the ADS national convention is set for April .110 and 11 in Richmond, Va.

CIOset to home:are' shOws set for'March 29 at St. Paul's Episcopal 'Church in Jeffersonville, April 5 and 6 at;the Cincinnati,Zoo and.Botanical Gardens and April, 17 and 18 at Holiday Park inIndianapolis.

The Indiana Daffodil Society, Which sponsors the show at Holidaypark, also maintains gardens in Bloomington and at Link Observatory near Mooresville.

The flowers at the observatory, now in the care of Indiana University, are due to the efforts of Helen Link, who died in 2002 and had quite the reputation for her love of daffodils.

The gardens featuring her work are sometimes open to the public during the spring.

Rather than wait for a show, however, visit the American Daffodil Society's Web site, [daffodilsa.org](http://daffodilsa.org), or take a look at [Daffseek.org](http://Daffseek.org).



PHOTO BY MARY DURTSCHI

Jetfire is the first daffodil to bloom in the author's yard, usually in-mid March. The swept-back petals indicate it belongs to Division 6.

There you will find a wealth of information, including a list of daffodil societies, a fomm for daffodil enthusiasts called Daffnet, information about the 13 divisions, a list of shows and daffodil societies, information on obtaining bulbs and a list of merchants who sell them.

But before clicking onto the Web site, a note of caution: Daffodils can become addictive.



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