



ISSUE NO. 85

florida daffodil society news

March 2013

ANNUAL MEETING:

May 18, 2013
9:30 AM Old Laundry House
Goodwood Museum and Gardens
Tallahassee, Florida

IDENTIFYING A DAFFODIL

Background

In 2011, Clifford Preston of the Gainesville, FL area joined the FDS. He purchased a lot of daffodils, then asked if we could identify a specific bloom and sent photographs which were not accurate enough to make a call.

History

Preston's neighbor, Mary Ann Emerson, had purchased the unidentified bulbs in the 1950s and grew them under a mimosa tree facing south. They did not multiply. In 1996, she gave the bulbs to Preston, who grows them in full sun. The bulbs are multiplying. Upon request, Preston sent bulbs to the Van Beck garden and this year they bloomed the last week of February, had their pictures taken and one went to the flower show. They were planted next to a post to make sure they could be found. The results were two different petal shapes: fat and round from a bulb in full sun; pointed and ridged from bulbs planted in the shade. Keith Kridler, our Texas guru, recently posted that soil, sun, and water exposure make a BIG difference in daffodils from the same patch, and to take photographs over 4-6 days as they really changed shape and size while in bloom. From general observation our mystery daffodil is a 7Y-Y, i.e., a Division 7 (Jonquilla) with yellow perianth and yellow cup.

The Hunt

First step: a review of the Van Beck library –

Book No. 1. Garden Bulbs for the South (2007, second edition) by author Scott Ogden.

He starts with a glowing account of 'Trevithian' and moves on to "other Jonquil hybrids that have settled into Southern life, including 'Sweetness', 'Lanarth', 'Golden Perfection' and 'Golden Sceptre'. All are described as being in common trade in the 1940-1950s, and mostly with solitary blooms having a deep yellow color and textured petals. All but 'Sweetness' have since become scarce; currently 'Sweetness' and 'Golden Perfection' bloom in the Van Beck Garden. Ogden provides three outdoor photos – 'Trevithian', 'Sweetness' and 'Golden Scepter', which leaves us with 'Lanarth'.

Book No. 2- Daffodils in Florida, a Field Guide to the Coastal South. The library houses some of Dr. Rhimes' original writings but it is easier to refer to the Field Guide. Dr. Frederick Rhimes was a prominent member of the American Daffodil Society, head of the University of Florida Engineering Department and a determined daffodilian who brought his bulbs to Gainesville in 1959. Checking his list of successful bloomers, reveals 'Lanarth' along with 'Sweetness', 'Waterperry', and 'Trevithian' (his Old Faithful).

Second step: the Internet –

We skip to the computer and google Daffseek (<http://daffseek.org>) which is part of the American Daffodil Society's arsenal. Click on Query, the search form pops up. Then plug in the name 'Lanarth'. Voila: which is translated -- there she comes, sort of. The photos are not all the same. The one from the National Arboretum is a sun shot and the rest are shade or growing shots – all different looking daffodils. Other information provided includes the name of the hybridizer, Percival D. Williams, and the date of registration with the Royal Horticultural Society as being prior to 1927.

Book No. 3- Show and Grow: Abridged classified List of Daffodil Names, 2002 Edition

published by ADS. ‘Lanarth’ was listed. While this information is also on DaffSeek, it proves daffodilians are still actively growing ‘Lanarth’.

Back to the computer -- Check with the historic daffodil people on the HistDaff listserve (another research source affiliated with the American Daffodil Society) and found three or four folks who currently grow ‘Lanarth’.

Back to the Library to check out P.D. Williams, who happens to be very famous. It is a well known fact that he didn’t keep records. It might be assumed that was because he was a Cornishman, hence suspicious, secretive and kept his cards close to his vest. Not so, says Michael Jefferson-Brown in his book Narcissus. Record keeping was routinely neglected by early breeders. P.D. had a penchant for naming his daffodils after local places. He started working at Lanarth, St. Keverne (Shire), Cornwall, in the 1890s and continued until his death in 1935. “The backbone of his breeding program was the yellow species trumpet *N. hispanicus* which gave all his cultivars a lasting quality, a healthy bulb and tough blue foliage.” “He must have had an exceptional eye and almost a mystical feeling for the game as his methods were opposite of methodical. Walking amongst his flowers with a favored flower in hand or buttonhole, he might see a possible seed parent. The flower would be taken and pollination effected immediately.” All in all, “it is impossible to over emphasize the importance of his contribution to the daffodil story.”

In checking Daffseek under the heading “hybridizer”, there are 283 bulbs registered for P.D. Williams’ bulbs. They include ‘Beryl’, ‘Carlton’, ‘Cragford’, ‘Peeping Tom’, ‘Scarlet Gem’, ‘Tresamble’, ‘Trevithian’ and ‘Tunis’, many of which have taken a turn in the FDS test garden. ‘Carlton’ is the most widely planted daffodil in the world. ‘Lanarth’ was originally registered in 1907. The warm climate of Cornwall aided P.D. with his hybridization program. Elsewhere there is a reference to P.D. growing his seedlings in his tenants’ stone wall enclosed gardens that abutted their homes (protected from the cold). P.D. said “I own the bulbs - you own the flowers”. P.D.’s last prominent daffodil was registered by his son

Michael as ‘St. Keverne’, in 1936. ‘St. Keverne’ has received accolades as the most rot-resistant bulb, and is an official roadside daffodil in North Carolina.

STEMS

This year will go down in history as the year of the floppy stems – too much heat, all leaves and few flowers! Alan Armitage states, “several differences are obvious between plants of the same species grown in southern and northern locales. In the South, plants flower earlier, are taller and often have weak stems [compared to those grown in the North]. Tall forms tend to collapse without support. Lanky leggy growth occurs at the expense of flower production.”

ANNUAL FLOWER SHOW

About 100 people came to the greenhouse at Tallahassee Nurseries. Our big banners looked great and the weather was good. Best of all were the displays of 100’s of white petal tazettas, anchored by 500 ‘Grand Primo’ and some wonderful floral arrangements. Our designers were The Reeds, Charlotte Watkins, Gunilla Trull and Mary Maud Sharpe.

The number of daffodils was reduced this year due to the weather and many were represented by one stem, but we spaced out the divisions with small bouquets so the final effect was lovely. All in all, there were 45 cultivars represented, counting *Telemomius Plenus* which finally turned yellow on Sunday afternoon. We will have photos in the next newsletter.

MEMBERSHIP

We all owe a debt of gratitude to Mary Maude Sharpe for her many years as membership chair. Our new chairman is Karen Kunz. To contact Karen, email stephenkunz@aol.com or call 850-443-4821. Dues payments can be mailed to Karen at: 8641 Coach Road, Tallahassee, FL 32309.

Dues may be paid with your bulb order. Dues are payable in May (\$5 Individual \$6 Family).