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Miniature Daffodils

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When a gardener discovers that price is not always a measure of value, that the new is not necessarily better than the old, and that quality cannot be equated with size, it might be said that he has reached years of horticultural discretion.

Numerous horticultural families have already been exploited in pursuit of size at the expense of more significant traits—dahlias, iris, and gladiolas, for example. Invariably, in these pursuits there are laggards with more enduring, if less conspicuous, qualities which recommend them to critical gardeners.

In the case of daffodils, if we may adopt the more comfortable term, there is a restless search for greater size and new effects.** The largest is never quite large enough. Breeders vie for the elusive pink and assure us that beyond lie pure red and ultimately lavender and purple trumpets. The conflicting judgment of Nature to paint with muted colors on a small scale until a background of green can be broken out to provide a restful setting for more dazzling effects must be set aside.

It is unfortunate that those who are willing to accept the meager rewards for engaging in the commercial production of daffodil bulbs find their work subject to the same economic laws which spawn new models of automobiles and hem lines. It is unfortunate because the attention of the gardener is focused on what the producer has to sell and years will be lost in acquiring the adventurous spirit which leads to the greatest satisfactions in gardening.

The hybridizing of daffodils began nearly a hundred years ago at the hands of English gentlemen and has been pursued vigorously ever since, but a generation requires not less than five years and the increase is leisurely. Many gar-

dens in this country are still not advanced beyond the era of 'Van Sion' and 'King Alfred'. A somewhat wider selection of sturdy Dutch garden varieties may now be found in local stores and the occasional enthusiast will order from the lists of the few specialists here and abroad. But emphasis is on size and the choices are usually limited to trumpets, large and small cups, and doubles, i.e., Division I to IV of the Official Classification of the Royal Horticultural Society. That ubiquitous fellow, the average gardener, may never learn that beyond the limited range to which he has easy access are many daffodils of great charm and unusual form, although smaller in comparison with those he usually sees.

The term "miniature" has been loosely applied in connection with small daffodils. As a rule, the triandrus, cyclamineus, jonquil, and tazetta hybrids; the species and wild forms and hybrids; in fact, all species and garden varieties with the possible exception of the poets, falling within Divisions V to XI of the Official Classification, are smaller in all their parts than the trumpets and cupped varieties. For that reason many tend to lump all these smaller daffodils together and consider them miniatures.

Daffodil shows offering classes for miniatures must make a more precise determination and have usually defined a miniature daffodil in terms of length of stem, a most unreliable test, subject to the vagaries of Nature and the guile of man. Width of flower or proportion of flower and stem have also served to offer shaky evidence of special classification. The Royal Horticultural Society has consistently defined a miniature daffodil as one "not exceeding 12 inches tall which has individual flowers not more than 2 inches in diameter when flattened out." However, only the largest daffodil shows have made any special provision for miniature daffodils. A few classes, limited entries poorly dis-

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**See "Exploring for Wild Narcissus" by Frederick G. Meyer, *The American Horticultural Magazine*, April, 1961.

played, and no prospect of major awards has been the traditional fate of small daffodils.

The goal of the early English hybridizers was larger flowers of better form and substance, but crossing the small species and the best of the available hybrids inevitably produced a percentage of seedlings marked by small size. Most of these were discarded at once or subsequently lost. A few, such as 'Colleen Bawn' (1889), lingered in gardens; others, such as 'W. P. Milner' (1890), have shown their ability to take care of themselves; and a small number, such as 'Sea Gift' and 'Pencrebar', have been salvaged and propagated by someone who cared.

Small daffodils were neglected until the 1920's when they caught the fancy of a Cornishman, Alec Gray. Gray began to collect them and shortly tried his hand at hybridizing. His achievements were displayed at the daffodil shows of the Royal Horticultural Society where they attracted considerable attention. For his work in breeding miniatures, Gray was awarded the Peter Barr Memorial Cup of the Society in 1945. He has written numerous articles for the Daffodil and Tulip Year Books of the Royal Horticultural Society and his Cornwall nursery is the primary source of stock for many varieties. In fact, so identified has Gray become with small daffodils that inclusion in his catalogue tends to confer miniature status, even though many of his listings are not miniature by any standard.

While Mr. Gray was the first and most effective advocate of small daffodils, others have shared his enthusiasm and done pioneer work. Sir Frederick Stern; F. R. Waley; and D. and J. W. Blanchard, father and son, are countrymen of Alec Gray, as was the late A. M. Wilson. Michael Fowlds and Grant Mitsch of Canby, Oregon; Mrs. George D. Watrous Jr., C. W. Culpepper, and the late Edwin C. Powell in the Washington area; and Mrs. Goethe Link of Martinsville, Indiana, have done creative work with smaller daffodils on this side of the Atlantic. Dr. Helen C. Scorgie has grown and studied them intensively for many years as rock garden subjects. The only commercial grower in this country who has attempted to stimulate interest in smaller daffodils is G. W. Heath, Nuttall, Virginia.

Some years ago a group of members of the American Daffodil Society who were interested in smaller daffodils undertook to determine the species and garden varieties to which the term "miniature daffodils" might properly be applied. After repeated attempts it was realized that it was impossible to write a definition which would operate consistently to segregate from all the smaller daffodils a group which were truly miniatures. A daffodil flower is a living thing which changes from day to day and varies from year to year. The response of bulbs of the same variety is also subject to regional and cultural conditions. Therefore, it was concluded to compile an arbitrary list of species and garden varieties which, after careful field study, should be classed as miniature daffodils in the opinion of a number of competent observers. Surprisingly, the voting of personal opinions produced nearly general agreement.

The proposed list of miniature daffodils was submitted to the membership of the American Daffodil Society at its annual meeting at Stratford, Connecticut, last April and adopted. The list, grouped according to the Official Classification of the Royal Horticultural Society, is as follows:

Div. I. Trumpets

- (a) Bowles Bounty
Charles Warren
Sneezy
Tanagra
Wee Bee
- (b) Bambi
Little Beauty
Rockery Beauty
Snug
- (c) Colleen Bawn
Rockery White
W. P. Milner

Div. II. Large Cups

- (a) Goldsithney
Marionette
Mustard Seed
Picarillo
Rosaline Murphy
- (b) Tweeny
- (c) None

Div. III. Small Cups

- (a) None
- (b) None
- (c) Xit

Div. IV. Doubles

Kehelland
Pencrebar

Div. V. Triandrus Hybrids

- (a) Kenellis
Mary Plumstead
Sennocke
Shrimp
Tristesse
- (b) Agnes Harvey
April Tears
Arctic Morn
Cobweb
Frosty Morn
Hawera
Raindrop
Samba

Div. VI. Cyclamineus Hybrids

- (a) Greenshank
Jetage
Jumblie
Minicycla
Mite
Mitzy
Snipe
Tête-à-Tête
The Little Gentleman
- (b) Quince

Div. VII. Jonquilla Hybrids

- (a) Little Prince
Skiffle
- (b) Bebop
Bobbysoxer
Demure
Flomay
Hi-Fi
Kidling
La Belle
Lintie
Pease-blossom
Pixie
Sea Gift
Stafford
Sundial
Sun Disc

Div. VIII. Tazetta Hybrids

Angie
Cyclataz
Halingy
Hiawassee
Hors d'Oeuvre
Pango
Shrew

Div. IX. Poeticus Hybrids

None

Div. X. Species and Wild Forms

N. asturiensis
N. atlanticus
N. bulbocodium (various)
N. calcicola
N. cantabricus (various)
N. cyclamineus
N. × dubius
N. 'Eystettensis'
N. fernandesii
N. hedraeanthus
N. jonquilla var. *minor*
N. juncifolius
N. minor
N. minor var. *conspicuous*
N. minor var. *pumilus*
N. pseudonarcissus
N. pseudonarcissus ssp. *alpestris*
N. pseudonarcissus ssp. *bicolor*
N. pseudonarcissus ssp. *moschatus*
N. pseudonarcissus ssp. *moschatus*
'Plenus'
N. pseudonarcissus ssp. *obvallaris*
N. rupicola
N. rupicola var. *marvieri*
N. scaberulus
N. tazetta ssp. *bertolonii*
N. tazetta 'Lacticolor Canaliculatus'
N. × tenuior
N. triandrus
N. triandrus 'Aurantiacus'
N. triandrus var. *albus*
N. triandrus var. *concolor*
N. triandrus var. *loiseleurii*
N. watieri

Div. XI. Miscellaneous

Elfhorn
Jessamy
Marychild
Muslin
Nylon
Poplin
Taffeta
Tarlatan

The American Daffodil Society has accepted the responsibility of examining future introductions of smaller daffodils to determine which should be added to the approved list of miniatures. In addition, some changes in the above list may prove to be desirable in the light of further study.

While a primary purpose of the approved list of miniature daffodils is to improve their competitive position at daffodil shows, it should have other important effects. For one thing, "Miniature" as applied to daffodils need no longer be an ambiguous term. It should be used hereafter only in connection

with species and garden hybrids named in the approved list. Oral discussion and correspondence may be carried on with mutual understanding and it is hoped that horticultural literature and bulb catalogues will accept the proposed classification. It should be emphasized, however, that publication of a list of miniature daffodils does not tamper in any way with the Official Classification of the Royal Horticultural Society. The small trumpet 'Tanagra' will continue in Division I(a). It is now merely identified as a trumpet of very small proportions.

Interest in all smaller daffodils is on the rise in this country and quite possibly is greater here than in England or Ireland; certainly more than in Holland. Fashions in daffodils abroad have been shaped by the hybridizers in the British Isles and Holland and greater size has been a common objective. The chief difference is the English and Irish hybridizers from the Rev. George H. Engleheart to the late Guy L. Wilson and J. Lionel Richardson have sought large flowers of perfect form for the show bench, while the Dutch, with their eyes on larger markets, have bred for large and spectacular garden varieties. With the exception of Alec Gray and, to some extent, of Michael Jefferson-Brown, the young Cornwall grower who abandoned a teaching career, European daffodil catalogues have always neglected the smaller forms, i.e., those falling within Divisions V to XI of the Official Classification. Growing interest in smaller daffodils on the one hand, and limited breeding for new varieties and slowness of increase on the other, have created a very tight market situation. While a source for the triandrus, cyclamineus, and jonquilla hybrids which have comparatively small flowers, but are not all true miniatures, can usually be found by a determined gardener, many

of the varieties on the list of miniatures are quite scarce and the demand is growing more rapidly than the supply. In fact, Alec Gray has practically withdrawn from the American trade since he is able to market his modest output within the British Isles.

The growing of miniature daffodils will always be rewarding to those who are fascinated by perfection on a small scale, but the field will never be crowded. However, miniature daffodils have some definite advantages in comparison with flowers of standard size. Most importantly, they will advance the season for the impatient gardener to whom the daffodil symbolizes the advent of another year. *N. asturiensis* and 'Tanagra' are likely to precede 'February Gold', itself a comparatively small flower but not a miniature, by a couple of weeks. 'Fortune', the first widely grown large flower, will be still later by a few days.

While some of the species miniatures can be a bit temperamental, as a rule the miniature garden varieties are less demanding than their larger colleagues. Genetically closer to their species forebears which grow in the mountains of the western Mediterranean, they are quite contented in a lean, stony soil which is hot and dry in summer and cold and windy in winter. The exception is *N. cyclamineus* which prefers shade and moisture. In addition, the season is lengthened by the appearance of *N. rupicola*, *N. scaberulus*, and some of the triandrus species and hybrids after the large flowers have passed.

The bulbs of small daffodils seem to be immune to the ravages of the daffodil fly, *Lampetia equestris*, a pest which seems to be on the increase in the northern parts of the United States. Possibly the larvae of the fly feel that the small bulbs offer inadequate winter pasturage for their healthy appetites.