

NARCISSUS CULTURE IN NORTHWEST TEXAS

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The *Narcissus* clones now in the trade as a rule do not grow as well here as in other parts of the country. Extremes of heat and drought from early May to late Fall are not conducive to the best growth of north temperature zone bulbs. In the Fall of 1947, there was a temperature of 70 to 74 degrees daily into December. If a location of high shade with no cultivation during the intense heat of summer is possible, many varieties will live and thrive. Where the exposure is to the full force of the Texas sun in the long extreme summer heat, many varieties go down so deep they can not bloom and often split up into small immature bulbs. Perhaps if they were dug, cured, and stored in a cool cellar as required to maintain strong, full tulip bulbs, they might be better grown.

Many of the newer, larger varieties decline. *Diotima* and *Ben Hur*, after three years were smaller flowered than seven year old *King Alfred*. *King Alfred* is climate proof. It is commonly grown around here. But the usual varieties seen in most gardens are the ones handed down from old gardens. Unfortunately most of these old ones are not passed on with any kind of name other than some local "nickname".

February through March is the usual flowering period. However there are some which commence in December and others carry through into April. *Narcissus Tazetta* var. *Paper White*, often buds in December and is frosted in the bud. There is a fragrant yellow jonquil which blooms in December and seems to escape being frozen ordinarily. The

doubles are early but the flowers are practically always blasted by frost at night so they do not mature, although from the next zone south of us they do mature. From Central Texas on South they flower well. *Narcissus odoratus Campernelle plenus*, *Twink*, *Mary Copeland* all blast from frost. There is an old one quite common in old gardens with the ridiculous name of "Scrambled Eggs" which is a good flower when it does not blast. There are three sizes of "Honey Jonquils" which never fail, even the severe freeze of this winter did not seem to hurt the flowers. The tiniest one is the first to bloom, starting in late January or the very first of February. It combines so well with the earliest of tiny spring flowering bulbs, especially the lovely fragrant Roman hyacinths, white, blue, and pink or even the purple Southern Belle. The middle size is second to flower, starting before the tiny one is quite through. The largest of the three, though it is a miniature, is the latest. They are so close together that one has to compare the flowers to see the difference in the sizes. "Early Daffodil" is another old variety which is desirable. It commenced to bloom the 4th of February this year, and should be even earlier in less severe winters. It has a white perianth with a pale yellow cup, a charming early flower to cut. *Narcissus Tazetta* var. *Orientalis*, always called "Chinese Sacred Lilies" flowers later than the "Paper Whites", and so usually blooms well. The bulb is quite large and increases so rapidly that, together with the knee-high leaf growth, requires plenty of growing room. Starting with 8 bulbs, in four years there were 15 clumps.

Diotima and *Ben Hur* are early in the big trumpet class, although *King Alfred* accompanies them. The middle to the third week in February is their usual flowering time.

In 1940, *Actaea*, *La Vestale*, *Glory of Lisse* and *Diana Kasner* were planted. Only *Diana Kasner* survived and flowered each year, and has increased enough to separate. However, this location was carefully fixed for a lily bed according to the instruction of the Lily Committee. It proved to be disastrous not only for lilies but most other bulbs and plants for this semi-arid region during the heat and drought of Texas summers here, especially during the war when no man power was available for flower gardens.

An old *Narcissus* called "Orange Queen" (but not true to name) is an early variety which does well. However, the most choice of the old ones is "Swan's Neck". This a charming flower in a class to itself. It is a strong grower, frost resistant, and cuts well.

In 1941, *Thalia*, *Whitewell*, *Laurens Koster*, *Mrs. Krelage*, and *Solfatare* were planted. *Thalia* flowered each year and has now increased sufficiently that it needs separating. Only a few *Whitewell*, planted in the same location, are now living. Only one *Laurens Koster* has survived, and no *Solfatare*. *Mrs. Krelage* has lived but has not increased and has not always flowered. Two different plantings were made of *Solfatare* and *Mrs. Krelage* and the pattern was repeated with *Mrs. Krelage* living and *Solfatare* dying out completely.

Beersheba, *Fortune*, *Dick Welband*, *Golden Harvest*, *Tunis*, *Daisy Shaffer*, *Van Waveren's Giant*, *Moonshine*, *Johanna*, *Roxane*, *W. P. Mil-*

ner are now being tried. *Triandus Albus* was planted but the severe freeze of this winter blasted the buds, perhaps in a milder winter, this variety may fare better. *Mrs. Backhouse* is a beautiful and choice variety which never fails to bloom, although it is very slow to increase. *Love-nest* is second to *Mrs. Backhouse* in the "pink" class.

There are other old ones but it is difficult to try to describe them with not even a "nickname" to designate them.

There is a distinct need for breeding work with *Narcissus* for this climatic region, and similar areas. Perhaps some enterprising gardeners will take it up as an interesting hobby. There is adequate material to start the experiments.