

# OLD NATURALIZED NARCISSUS IN THE SOUTH

JO N. EVANS, *Louisiana*

If you are driving through Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama or Georgia during the winter months, you will see *Narcissus* blooming in almost every yard. You will often see old cemeteries that are carpeted with these bulbs; if you look you will see them blooming in fields where an old home once stood or they may have wandered off down the ditch banks, or even along the side of the road.

You will, perhaps, wonder who planted these bulbs,—how did they get there and what *Narcissus* could they be? They are the old *Narcissus* of early southern gardens, probably some of the very first flowers to be brought to this country.

The first of these old bulbs to bloom is a pure white Tazetta or cluster type, on a stem not taller than six inches and we can usually gather them at Thanksgiving. The next *Narcissus* to come into bloom has a taller white cluster, much like the paperwhite of today's commercial trade. By Christmas a tall, creamy white Tazetta is in bloom, this one has pointed petals and very tall stems; it is locally called Star or Christmas *Narcissus*.

The first of January finds PEARL in bloom. This is the most beautiful of all cluster *Narcissus*, it has large heads of flowers and tall stiff stems, the substance of the blossom is very heavy. When Jan de Graaff was a visitor at Haphazard Plantation recently he told me that PEARL was the same name that this bulb was called in some very old books on *Narcissus* that he owned. By the middle of January the little yellow trumpet—*N. minor* is in bloom, this one is a very sturdy little bulb, the weather never seems to bother it. It gives our southern gardens a lot more color than the early February Gold does.

In the latter part of January our true love comes into bloom, the little white trumpet SWAN'S NECK [Fig. 12]. This is not to be confused with the little white trumpet in the commercial trade, J. P. MILNER, because the former has much more character and charm.

During February the short cupped daffodils bloom. Some of these are just as beautiful as the modern named varieties—others are not so

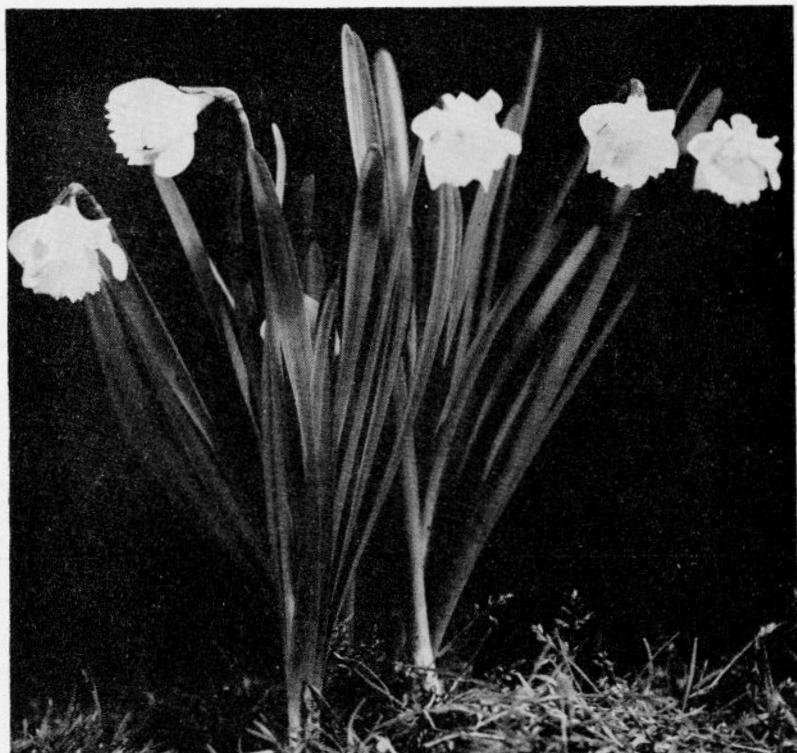


Fig. 12. Hybrid Narcissus—SWAN'S NECK as naturalized in Louisiana.  
Photo by Lillian Grey.

good. There are no local names for these and one has to select them while in bloom. The little species *N. poeticus* is locally known as WHITE LADY, it is a very nice little bulb with blossoms about the size of a fifty-cents piece.

When we see these old bulbs blooming in such profusion, even where they have been left undisturbed fifty years or more, and growing under most any kind of conditions, one wonders what has happened that makes the large modern *Narcissus* so intolerant of our southern gardens. Perhaps the modern breeder has had no interest in southern gardens or, perhaps he did not realize he was taking the south out of the bulbs as he developed them for northern gardens.