

THE GRANT AND AMY MITSCH AWARD

JEAN AND TOM THROCKMORTON, *Des Moines, Iowa*

The fact that lovely daffodils are being bred and shown by amateur hybridizers has gone almost unnoticed by the American Daffodil Society. To be sure, in most daffodil shows there has always been a section for "unnamed seedlings." This is usually in a darker, out-of-the-way corner; occasionally one of these seedlings has seen the light as "Best-of-Show."

More recently, unnamed seedlings have been allowed to compete with standard daffodils in the classified divisions of the show — a step in the right direction. However, no real recognition, except the Rose Ribbon, has ever been accorded these outstanding seedlings. Yet, the ADS has many lovely awards for highly specialized daffodils or groups of daffodils. It seems a strange oversight that today's daffodil children, from which may come tomorrow's show winner and garden stalwart, have been largely overlooked!

The ADS Board of Directors has remedied this oversight. At the fall Board meeting, October, 1978, the Board voted a distinguished Award for the best unnamed seedling standard daffodil to be exhibited at the show, held in conjunction with the annual Daffodil Convention. This Award is doubly distinguished by honoring America's greatest daffodil hybridizer and by the rules which govern the achievement of the prize: "The Grant and Amy Mitsch Award for Daffodil Hybridizing shall be given for three stems of the best standard daffodil seedling, from any division, exhibited by the raiser at a National Daffodil Show. The Award shall be a 'traveling prize' and given annually when in the opinion of the judges it is warranted."

Think this over! Grant Mitsch honors this Award by his very pre-eminence as a hybridizer:

(1) He has given us 358 new and lovely cultivars, distributed through all standard divisions except Division 12.

(2) He has been the recipient of every distinguished daffodil award available to him, including the Peter Barr Cup, and the Gold Medal of the ADS.

(3) He has given and shared his time, knowledge, bulbs, pollen and seeds to any who asked. His competitors are among his most sincere admirers and friends.

(4) His personal simplicity, rectitude, and example have removed a great measure of "con artistry" from the daffodil world.

As to Amy Mitsch, I don't suppose she has made many daffodil crosses. She's been too busy taking care of Grant and "running the store:" cutting flowers for the market; staging blooms; keeping records and books; making sales; marking, digging, cleaning and sorting bulbs; running a restaurant and rest station during the high season of bloom.

And Grant and Amy together have produced two lovely daughters, both daffodil enthusiasts. One of them, Elise, with her husband, Dick, are taking over the "business" — this will enable Grant and Amy to go right

ahead and work as hard as ever. Elise Havens has some lovely new introductions; but you've not heard the last of the Mitschs.

The rules which govern the Mitsch Award are unique in their own way. It is common knowledge that the first or "maiden" bloom of a daffodil seedling may well be the only really elegant bloom the cultivar ever throws. This has always bothered Grant in that unproved and probably uncharacteristic seedling blooms may be found in competition with named cultivars whose true capabilities are known. Therefore, to win the Mitsch Award, the exhibitor must enter a vase of three stems of his seedling — offering solid evidence of what the cultivar has done over a period of several years. The blooms must be grown and staged by the "raiser;" i.e., the person first blooming the cultivar.

Thus, the Mitsch Award honors those very things in which the Mitschs believe. It will also honor the hybridizer who earns it.



The Grant and Amy Mitsch Trophy
(Gripshover photo)