

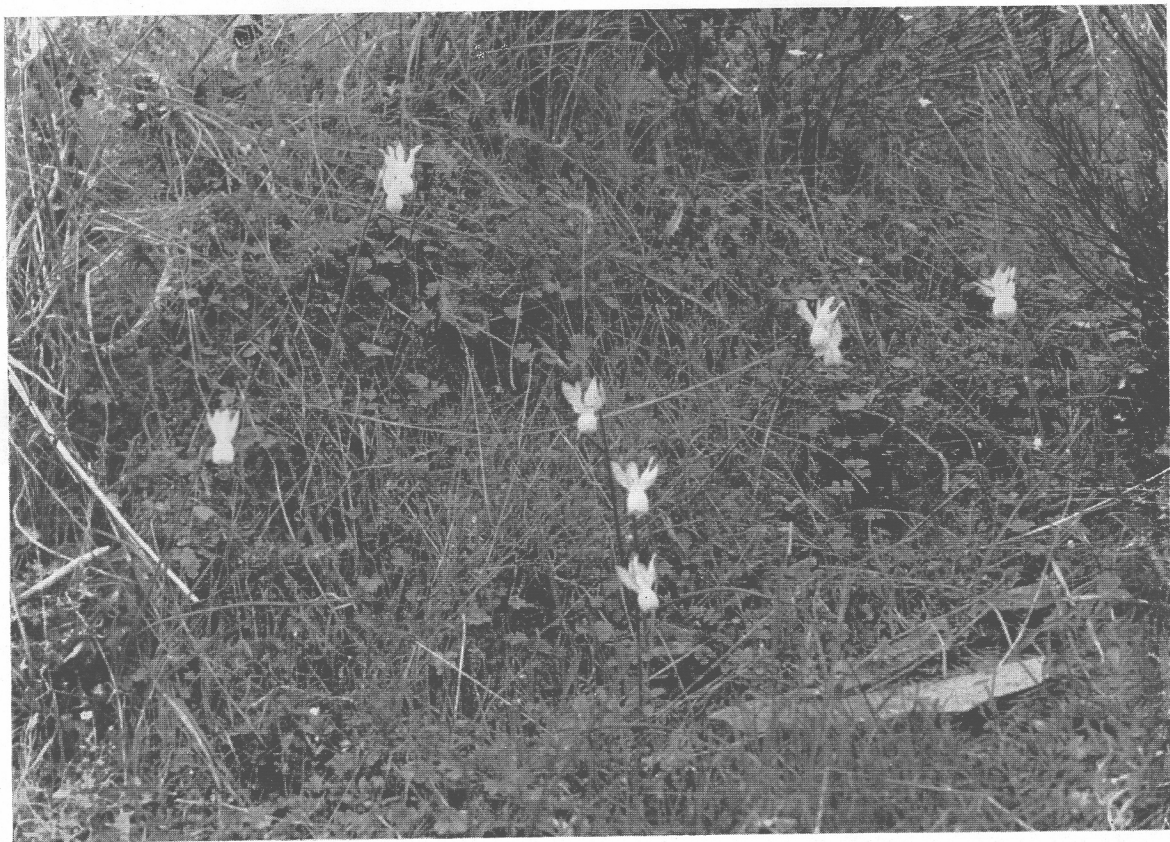
DWARF NARCISSI IN NORTH PORTUGAL.

By A. Q. WELLS.

The most likely place for anyone to arrive in Portugal is Lisbon, whether you travel by sea or air or train. From Lisbon you either go north or you go south; if you are very wealthy and very leisured you do both. We went north. This article, therefore, deals only with those Narcissi which grow north of the latitude of Lisbon or rather a line north of Setubal. We gave that amount of hostage to wealth and leisure. Two species, *Narcissus jonquilloides* and *Narcissus minutiflorus* are said to grow in the south. It is doubtful, however, if either are true species, so perhaps we did not miss much.

There are two generalities about *Narcissus* in the wild which impressed themselves on me. Probably both are well appreciated by the knowledgeable, but they were not to me until I went to Portugal. The first is that *Narcissus* is not, on the whole, a genus of the mountains. True, you cannot go far in Portugal without getting mixed up with mountains, but most species of *Narcissus* grow at low altitudes. The second is that although the many varieties of some species are nice and distinct in our gardens, they are nothing of the sort in nature. They blend into one another with all gradations from one variety to another until one gives up in despair as to what one is looking at. This particularly applies to *Narcissus Bulbocodium* and *Narcissus triandrus*, the two really common species. What is the type species and what is a variety is anyone's guess. This is, of course, the true meat to determinative botanists, but perhaps of less interest to horticulturists.

Narcissus Bulbocodium. This grows very widely indeed in Portugal. Coutinho's *Flora Portuguesa* gives the locality as *Todo o país*. After looking this up in the dictionary I was disappointed to find that it means the whole country. A list of localities where we found it would be tedious and uninteresting, because we saw it the first day we arrived and the last day we left—and most days in between. It grows, of course, in other places than Portugal. In Portugal it is an astonishingly variable plant in height, size of flower, colour of flower and habitat. We found flower stems of from 2 to 24 ins. high. The smallest were the variety *nivalis*,



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Narcissus triandrus var. *pulchellus*.

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Narcissus triandrus × *N. Bulbocodium* var. *nivalis*.

always found high up and in great quantity growing in very wet irrigated grass fields where the water was overflowing from the irrigation canals. The largest was found in the Setubal peninsula, not more than 200 ft. above sea level. One stem was measured and pressed. The height was exactly 24 ins. above ground. It was growing in lush rushy grass by the roadside. The colour of the flowers was also very variable and the designation *citrinus*, *aureus* and so on is nothing more than a colour variation from one flower to the next. There are all gradations from lemon to orange, but not white. The white variety, *monophyllus*, occurs chiefly in Africa and also, perhaps, in southern Spain.

The type plant is described as having a flower stem 4-7 ins. high with rush-like leaves longer than the flower stem. The corona is obconical, obscurely denticulate and of uniform colour. The style, but not the stamens, are frequently exserted. Certainly this description is true of a large number of the plants, particularly round Cintra and on the Serra da Arrábida, a limestone range of low altitude in the Setubal peninsula. In the Arrábida it is more a true montane plant than anywhere else. It grows near the tops in incredible numbers between the rocks.

The variety *obesus* is described as having prostrate leaves, shorter than the flower stem with an untoothed corona wider than the type. The tube and corona have well defined green markings. This variety gave us a lot of trouble. We found some flowers which corresponded to the description mixed up with great numbers of otherwise type flowers. Again we found some stands where the great majority of flowers seemed to be var. *obesus* but some had no green markings and others upright leaves. Others again had a toothed edge to the corona. The places where the majority seemed to fit the description of var. *obesus* were near Cantanhede, near Pegoës and in the Setubal peninsula. Two of these localities were almost pure sand and the other rather marshy ground with tall vegetation.

The variety *nivalis* seemed to be the most consistently distinct. It is dwarfer, with the stamens *and* style exserted from the corona. We only saw it growing in waterlogged ground high up. It was particularly abundant in the Serra Rebardeos, where it was comparable in number with buttercups in an English meadow. It seemed to us the least attractive of the varieties of *Narcissus Bulbocodium*. The fact that the stamens and style stick out of the corona gives it the appearance of a malformation.

Narcissus triandrus. This, like *N. Bulbocodium*, is very widespread in Portugal. Although we saw it in a number of places, it never appeared in quite the same massed colonies as *N. Bulbocodium*. It has a small bulb with narrow leaves. The flower stem is 6-8 ins. long and did not vary greatly in length. Most plants had 1-3 flowers. The varietal names of *N. triandrus* are mostly given to colour variations of the flowers. Botanists seem to disagree as to what is the type plant and what a variety, but as colour is botanically the least important differentiating character, we could see no reason for any varietal names. Horticulturally there are 3 fairly distinct varieties.

The commonest form, which I prefer to call *N. triandrus* with no suffix, is uniformly cream coloured. It grows very widely along the banks of the Douro and its tributaries, and is fairly catholic as regards the position it chooses. Usually we saw it on banks, but sometimes in sparse woodland.

A good variety is var. *pulchellus*. This grows under the same conditions as the type, but the reflexed segments are primrose yellow, with a cream or even white corona. We saw this quite commonly near Amarante and above the Rio Sabor near Moncorvo.

Probably the best variety from the garden point of view is var. *aurantiacus*. Here the whole flower is a golden yellow. We only saw it once, near Albergaria-a-Velha, growing in woodland. It was very lovely in spite of the fact that it was pouring with rain.

Narcissus triandrus × *Bulbocodium*. There are a number of *N. triandrus* hybrids of man-made origin, but some occur in nature as well. It seems as if *N. triandrus* hybridises in nature only with *N. Bulbocodium*, but this may well be a question of opportunity rather than desire. The only hybrid we found was clearly between *N. triandrus* and *N. Bulbocodium* var. *nivalis*. The photograph shows the hybrid with a flower of *N. triandrus* in the background. Below the hybrid were enormous numbers of *N. Bulbocodium* var. *nivalis*. Bowles dismisses the natural hybrids rather curtly as "not so attractive as their parents". The one we found impressed us as being the most beautiful narcissus we saw in Portugal. It was growing in a rocky outcrop above a very wet irrigated meadow in the Serra Rebardeos near Vila da Nova Reina. The flower stem was 10 ins. high and the flowers a uniform golden yellow, considerably larger than either parent. The corona was not bowl shaped as in *N. triandrus*, but less open than *N. Bulbocodium*. The

segments were partially reflexed. Other hybrids are said to occur near Bragança and near Miranda do Douro, but we did not see them.

Narcissus asturiensis. This used to be called *N. minimus*. Some floras list a species which they call *N. minor*, which from the description is a slightly enlarged *N. asturiensis*. There seems no justification for this distinction, because *N. asturiensis* varies quite a lot in size in one small patch. *N. asturiensis* seemed to us to be one of the few wild flowers that look better in the garden than in nature. It is possible that the rain and sleet and general misery of the day we saw it prejudiced us a little against it. It was growing in thin scrub high up in the Serra Rebardeos in no great quantity, and looked no happier than we felt. As a companion it had *Erythronium Dens-canis* which put on a much braver front and looked altogether charming. *Narcissus asturiensis* grows also in the Serra da Estrella but the snow still covered it when we were there.

Narcissus Jonquilla. I do not believe that *N. Jonquilla* was originally a Portuguese plant at all. It looks as if it only grows in Portugal by courtesy of Spain. I think it grows in Spain in fairly dry places in the mountains. In Portugal it grows in the silt of the great rivers, notably the Douro, and it has obviously been washed down from higher up. We found it near the Spanish border at Barca d'Alva on the banks of the Douro in places where it would be covered by the river when in flood. It is an exquisite, graceful flower with a very long tube. Some flower stems have as many as 7 flowers, wonderfully scented. The plant has a light and airy look of great breeding. When we saw it, it was again raining heavily but that did not detract from its elegance.

Narcissus rupicola. This is a rare plant in Portugal. It grows, as we saw it, in clefts of huge slabs of granitic rock near Carrazeda de Ancaes. We had quite a job to find it and the sun had already set before our jumping from rock to rock ended. Getting down again in the dark after we had finished trying to photograph it was not very amusing. It grows also in the Serra da Estrella but does not flower there until June. The charming solitary flowers distinguish it from the other Portuguese members of the jonquil group. They are a splendid clear yellow. The height of the flower stem varies quite a lot, depending presumably on the depth of the cleft of rock in which they are growing.

Narcissus scaberulus. This is said to be a very local species of the jonquil group, although I suspect that it is not quite so local as it is reputed to be. We found it growing in fair quantity on the banks of a river between Oliveira do Conde and Oliveira do Hospital. It has a very small orange flower usually two to a stem. It was growing on a steep wooded bank sloping to a small river. The height of the flower stem varied quite a lot. Some were 12 ins., but the majority 4-6 ins. It is probably dwarfer and more even in size higher up, where it grows in the granitic detritus. We did not think it a very distinguished plant in nature—nor do I think it is when growing in the garden.

Narcissus calcicola. This gave us a rare hunt and I thought we were going to be unsuccessful. It is reported from a limestone mountain near Porto de Mos, but we did not see it there. This is the only habitat given for it. We eventually found it on the north slopes of the Serra da Arrábida, another limestone range. It was growing between tall maquis plants, sometimes in rocks and sometimes in very gritty soil. The flower stem is 8-10 ins. high and rather floppy. There were 1-4 flowers on each stem. The flowers are larger than *N. scaberulus* but they are still too small for the size of the flower stem.

Narcissus Tazetta. This is a very much more robust plant than any of the others described. It is often a garden escape, but we found it once a long way from habitation growing near the roadside north of Cantanhede. It is too well known to need any description.

Narcissus cyclamineus. It looks as if *N. cyclamineus* as a wild plant is doomed. It is the only miniature daffodil in Portugal which has a price on its head. As a result the Portuguese have dug it up in large quantities in the rather restricted area where it grows. It is hard to blame the peasant, who is poor enough by any standard, for despoiling his flora to get the few escudos which he is offered for a hundred by the wholesale bulb dealers. Unfortunately it is very easily recognised by anyone who has no knowledge whatever of *Narcissus* species and even more unfortunately it grows in an area which is fairly thickly populated. Only 2 stations are known where it still exists and in both we saw ample evidence of digging and very few flowering plants. Growing on the banks of small streams and in water meadows, it is completely charming. When it grew in immense numbers it must have been an unforgettable sight.



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Narcissus Tazetta.

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Narcissus Jonquilla.

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