

Here's a wealth of information about **DAFFODILS** from our email *Gazette* and past catalogs, starting with the most recently published. For other topics, please see our main [Newsletter Archives](#) page.

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You might also enjoy our page of expert advice on [“Daffodils for the South and Warm West”](#).

Fragrant Tazettas are Top-5 Favorite at Popular Public Garden



In its January 2020 issue, *Horticulture* magazine shines a spotlight on our good customer and home-state treasure, the Frederik Meijer Gardens and Sculpture Park.

Located in Grand Rapids, Meijer Gardens features scores of impressive sculptures, a vast conservatory filled with orchids and tropical birds, a recreated 1930s farmstead with heirloom plants, an English-style perennial border reinterpreted in North American natives, and a lot more.

The article also showcases five of “Meijer Gardens’ Favorite Spring Plants” – hellebores, ‘Jack Frost’ Siberian bugloss, ‘Arnold Promise’ witchhazel, ‘Mount Airy’ fothergilla, and – drumroll, please – tazetta narcissus. “This daffodil group carries numerous sweet-scented flowers on each stem,” *Horticulture* explains, and “many tazettas are tried-and-true heirloom varieties.”

We're proud to say we offer six of those fragrant heirlooms, including iconic [‘Grand Primo’](#), introduced in 1780, and orange-cupped [‘Geranium’](#) (pictured) from 1930. You can [see them all here](#) – and if you order now for delivery this fall, you'll be able to enjoy their enchanting perfume in your own garden next spring! (January 2020)

2 Experts, 3 Fall-Planted Treasures



If you don't have an expert head gardener or landscape architect living next door to help you with your bulb-planting choices this fall, here are three recommendations we've gathered for you. (No need to thank us.)

[‘Galanthus elwesii’](#) – Writing in the February 2019 issue of *Gardens Illustrated*, British head gardener Tom Brown calls Elwes snowdrop “a superb form of this winter favorite,” adding “I particularly enjoy growing this species, not only for the large, white flowers – which can often be twice the size of our much-loved common snowdrop – but also because of the opulent, glaucous foliage.” (The RHS is also a big fan, having given it the prestigious Award of Garden Merit.)

[‘Thalia’](#) – In his list of “100 Most Beautiful and Useful Plants,” in that same issue of *Gardens Illustrated*, Swedish landscape architect Ulf Nordfjell includes this popular old daffodil. He describes it as “a late-flowering cultivar that produces many pure white flowers,” and says it “provides a delicate counterpoint to early shoots of perennials such as astilbes and epimediums.”

[‘Duchesse de Nemours’](#) – This grand old peony is another of Nordfjell's “100 Most Beautiful and Useful Plants.” It's “an old-fashioned, scented, double, creamy-white flowering peony, and a real beauty,” he writes, and “my favorite, especially among carpets of violets.” (And even though it's over 150 years old, the ‘Duchesse’ is an RHS Award of Garden Merit winner, too.) (August 2019)

BMOC – Big Yellow Mystery Daffodil Thrives in Zone 8b/9a Louisiana

“These big yellow daffodils have multiplied and bloomed prolifically for us here,” wrote our good customer Carlos Doolittle, landscape manager at Southeastern Louisiana University, “and I'm hoping you can help me learn their true identity.”

The photos Carlos attached – including the one here – showed a Division 2/large-cup daffodil with petals a shade lighter than the cup, and he told me they usually started blooming in early February.



Since very few “big yellow daffodils” do well in climates that are as hot and wet as it is at SLU – which is 45 miles northwest of New Orleans, right on the border of zone 8b and 9a – I was intrigued.

“About a decade ago,” Carlos wrote, “an elderly lady, Mrs. Vertalie Blaylock, of Loranger, Louisiana, shared daffodils with my grandmother. They multiplied rapidly, and I transplanted some to my home and eventually to campus. Everywhere I have planted them, they have multiplied rapidly.”

Since there are literally thousands of varieties of big yellow daffodils, at first I worried that identifying this one would be a hopeless task. But after Carlos sent me measurements of its petals, cup, and foliage, and then described its scent as honey-like, I began to feel more optimistic.

I asked him to send his photos and information to a couple of friends who know a lot more about Southern daffodils than I do – Sara Van Beck of Georgia (and formerly Florida) and Greg Grant of Texas – and I’m happy to say we all came to the same conclusion: Mrs. Blaylock’s daffodil is probably ‘[Carlton](#)’.

“That’s what it looks like to me,” Greg said, adding that ‘Carlton’ is “the most dependable yellow daffodil here” in north-east Texas.

Sara agreed, and in her book *Daffodils in Florida*, she says ‘Carlton’ “should be the backbone of any daffodil bed” in the Deep South, partly because it’s “the most resistant (of the large yellows) to basal rot” which can wreak havoc on daffodils in hot, wet soils.

Carlos was happy to finally have a name for Mrs. Blaylock’s daffodil, especially since he’s planning “to eventually have masses of daffodils as a signature of our campus landscapes.” Daffodils, he says, are the perfect choice because “not only do their bright yellow blooms bring cheer during the dreary days of winter, but our campus colors here at Southeastern are green and gold.” (March 2019)

Love in Bloom: What Do Your Valentine’s Day Flowers Say about You?



“Does the kind of flower you send say anything about you as a lover? I think it does.”

So says Anna Pavord, superstar garden writer and bulb-lover, in *The Curious Gardener*. Here’s her modern take on the language of flowers, including her favorite Valentine’s Day flower – tulips!

Roses – “From a lover who feels safest as one of the herd and for whom imagination will never be a strong point.”

Carnations – “Acceptable only if they overpower you with their smell. If they don’t, then your lover too must be under suspicion of being unable to deliver what the outside appearance promises.”

Daffodils – “I’d trust a man who gave me daffodils. . . . Daffodils fit the bill seasonally, and in love as in life, you like to feel you are getting the right things at the right time. . . . There’s hope in daffodils. That’s a dangerously fragile commodity at the best of times, but now is the season to indulge it.”

Lilies – “Fine if you can live up to the theatrical aura they throw around them. Lilies will come from people who care very much about their appearance. . . . Let the stamens be the deciding factor. If your Valentine insists on cutting them off, on the grounds that the pollen will stain the Armani suit, then get free of the relationship as soon as you can. Just think how such a suitor would hog the bathroom. Impossible.”

Tulips – “As far as I’m concerned, these are the best, indeed the only flowers to send or receive on Valentine’s Day. Wild, irrepressible, wayward, unpredictable, strange, subtle, generous, elegant, tulips are everything you would wish for in a lover. Best of all are the crazy parrot tulips such as [‘Rococo’](#) [pictured here] with red and pink petals feathered and flamed in crinkly lime-green. ‘When a young man presents a tulip to his mistress,’ wrote Sir John Chardin (*Travels in Persia*, 1686), ‘he gives her to understand by the general red color of the flower that he is on fire with her beauty, and by the black base that his heart is burned to coal.’ That’s the way to do it.”

If you’re a daffodil, lily, or tulip kind of lover, we’re here for you! Order any of our luscious, romantic, [fall-planted treasures now](#) for delivery at planting time in October. (Feb. 2019)

The Heirloom Daffodil Orchard at England’s Felley Priory



Featured on the cover of *Gardens Illustrated*, Felley Priory's Daffodil Orchard is the "crowning glory" of its "renowned gardens" – and filled with nothing but heirlooms.

The Priory has been in the Chaworth-Musters family since 1822, but most of the daffodils were planted in the 1940s. Since then, many of their names had been lost, so the Priory asked three experts – including our friend Ron Scamp – to help identify them.

Among those they recognized were '[Beersheba](#)', '[Mrs. R.O. Backhouse](#)', '[Trevithian](#)', '[Van Sion](#)', and '[W.P. Milner](#)', but many others "were deemed to be natural hybrids . . . or old cultivars

whose names have been lost." Nameless or not, the Priory's daffodils were so impressive that the experts "were spotted standing under an old pear tree, dabbing their eyes with their handkerchiefs, overwhelmed by the magnitude and beauty of the display."

The article also includes photos of "12 Great Cultivars for Naturalizing," which you can [view at our blog](#). We offer eight of them: '[Bath's Flame](#)', '[Beersheba](#)' ("attracts the notice of all by its glittering whiteness," said the great E.A. Bowles), '[Croesus](#)', '[Lucifer](#)', '[Mrs. R.O. Backhouse](#)' (named by breeder Robert Backhouse in memory of his wife), '[Sulphur Phoenix](#)' ("double flowers of bright lemon and pale cream with good weather resistance"), '[Van Sion](#)', and '[W.P. Milner](#)' (named by breeder Henry Backhouse for his brother-in-law).

Even if – alas! – you don't have an old orchard, you can start your own magnificent display of long-lived heirloom daffodils by [ordering now](#) for October delivery. (Sept. 2018)

Searching for the Lost Daffodils of Reverend Engleheart

You may not know it, but if you love 'Beersheba', 'Lucifer', or 'White Lady', you're a fan of the Reverend George Engleheart.



One of the greatest daffodil breeders of all time, Engleheart introduced some 700 named varieties starting in 1889. Although most of these have been lost over the years, a brand new National Collection in England is hoping to find and preserve as many as they can.

Engleheart was the vicar of a small country church when he first started breeding daffodils in the 1880s. Once a minor garden flower, daffodils at the time were on the rise, championed as perennial, graceful, and old-fashioned – heirloom, that is! – in contrast to the new, brightly colored exotics that filled Victorian carpet beds and conservatories.

Engleheart was so devoted to his daffodils that it's said parishioners would sometimes find a note tacked to the church door reading, "No service today, working with daffodils." His place in daffodil history was assured in 1898 when he sold three bulbs of his vividly orange-cupped '[Will Scarlett](#)' for the equivalent today of over \$12,000.

The new National Collection holds just 34 of Engleheart's 700 daffodils, with another four located but not yet in their hands. To help them find more, the Collection's Anne Tweddle asked us to spread the word about their project, so that's what we're doing.

Of the 34 they grow, we're currently offering six for delivery this fall – '[Bath's Flame](#)', '[Beersheba](#)', '[Cassandra](#)', '[Firebrand](#)' (pictured here), '[Lucifer](#)', and '[White Lady](#)' – and in the past we've offered six others that we'll offer again once our stocks increase – '[Albatross](#)', '[Argent](#)', '[Brilliancy](#)', '[Horace](#)', '[Seagull](#)', and '[Will Scarlett](#)'.

For more about Engleheart and the Collection, and to see photos of 23 of his daffodils, go to suffolkplants.org.uk/national-collections/narcissus. For a complete list of his 700 introductions, enter Engleheart in the Hybridizer box at daffseek.org. And if you know where the Collection can find any they don't already have, Anne would be very happy to hear from you at anne@tweddle1.co.uk. (April 2018)

Heirloom Daffodils (and OHG) Featured in *Garden Design*

The spring 2017 issue of *Garden Design* arrived here last week with a host of excellent articles including profiles of Annie's Annuals and Floret Flower Farm as well as "Small Gardens, Big Ideas" which explores gardens ranging in size from a fifth of an acre to a mere 400 square feet.



Best of all, though, is an eight-page article about daffodils which, I'm happy to say, gives heirlooms as much attention as modern varieties. (Thank you, *Garden Design* friends!)

"Deer hate them," author Meg Ryan begins. "They're low maintenance. They have a wildflowerish charm. And there are enough heirloom and newly developed varieties . . . that they offer gardeners endless opportunities for discovery. Says plant historian Scott Kunst, "They keep things richly complicated. . . ."

To see what else we talked about – as well as photos of dozens of daffodils including our heirlooms 'Bantam', 'Beersheba', 'Butter and Eggs', 'Geranium', 'Mrs. Langtry', 'Rip van Winkle', 'Stainless', 'Sweetness', 'Thalia', 'Trevithian', and 'Van Sion' (aka 'Telamonius Plenus') – look for *Garden Design* at your local newsstand

or bookstore, or subscribe online at gardendesign.com.

And if you see an heirloom there you especially like, you can order it now at oldhousegardens.com/daffodils. (Mar. 2017)

43 Daffodil Shows Begin Now (Including Michigan's First!)



From heirlooms to varieties so new they don't even have names, tens of thousands of daffodils will soon be on public display in 43 ADS daffodil shows all across the country.

The season kicks off this weekend with shows in California, Louisiana, and Dallas; the spectacular National Show is March 10-12 in Sacramento; and it all ends May 7 in Sheboygan, Wisconsin.

Michigan will have its own show this year, April 26-27, at Fernwood Botanical Garden in Niles. For an added treat, the fields of breeder John Reed will also be open to the public. Organizers hope the events will help spur the founding of a

Michigan Daffodil Society. (Sign us up!) (March 2017)

Will the Real Mrs. Langtry Please Stand Up?



Unfortunately we recently discovered that the daffodil we've sold for many years as 'Mrs. Langtry' is actually some other unknown daffodil.

Our NOT 'Mrs. Langtry' (photo on right) came to us from one of Holland's leading experts on historic bulbs, and as you can see it looks a lot like the TRUE 'Mrs. Langtry' (photo on left). It's definitely a very old daffodil, probably from the late 1800s.

However, the cup of the true 'Mrs. Langtry' opens a pale, creamy yellow and then matures to what the official RHS/ADS description calls "yellowish white, with canary yellow at rim." The cup of the NOT 'Mrs. Langtry', on the other hand, starts out a richer yellow and never quite gets to "yellowish white."

We've already contacted everyone who ordered 'Mrs. Langtry' and offered a refund. We've also posted an [EXPANDED version of this article](#) at our website so you can learn more. Please share it and help us spread the word about this mix-up.

And here's some happier news: Breeder William Backhouse apparently named 'Mrs. Langtry' not for Lillie Langtry, the scandalous Victorian actress, but for the wife of one of his gardeners who was also, more importantly, his family's beloved housekeeper. (Sept. 2016)

'Thalia' at Chanticleer: "Reliably Elegant and Breath-Taking"

Chanticleer horticulturist Emma Seniuk had high praise for the graceful white ['Thalia' daffodil](#) in the June 2016 issue of *Fine Gardening*

"This classic daffodil is so beautiful that upon first sight of the flower, I swore I would name my first-born daughter Thalia. Pure, nearly translucent white blossoms are held in sweetly nodding



clusters with reflexed petals. There is a slight fragrance to the blooms, too.

“It is one of the latest blooming daffodils, with thin, grass-like foliage. This feature makes the deterioration of ‘Thalia’ a graceful event compared to other daffodils whose fat, heavy foliage collapses into a heap looking like a pile of discarded linguini.

“Stunning in combination with Virginia bluebells (*Mertensia virginica*), ‘Thalia’ is reliably elegant and breath-taking year after year.” (And you can [order it now](#) for planting this fall!) (Aug. 2016)

Saint Louis to Host World Daffodil Convention, April 6-10

This spring, for the first time in sixteen years, the World Daffodil Convention will be back in the US. From April 6-10, experts and enthusiasts from around the globe will gather in St. Louis for lectures, tours, and a daffodil show that’s expected to include 3000 blooms.

Our friend Eric Breed of the Netherlands is one of the keynote speakers, and other experts from Chile, New Zealand, England, Scotland, Northern Ireland, and the US will speak on topics ranging from autumn-flowering daffodils, wild daffodils, and daffodil evolution to recent breeding around the world.

For readers of our newsletter, three talks on heirloom daffodils promise to be of special interest. Caroline Thomson of Scotland, a descendent of the well-known Backhouse family, will talk about “The Backhouse Heritage Daffodil Collection at Rofsie-Estate.” Mitch Carney of Maryland will talk about daffodils from 1940 to 1969 which the ADS defines as Classic Daffodils. And our friend Sara Van Beck of Atlanta will talk about “Daffodils in Catalogs: From Broadside to Photogravure.”

Registration for this vast buffet of daffodil excitement is just \$287 if postmarked by March 1. Learn more at www.stldaffodilclub.org/wdc2016. (Feb. 2016)

Lost . . . and Found? Gaye’s “Tiny Little Cream-Colored Daffodils”

We love it when our customers use the “Special Requests and Feedback” section of our online order form. That’s where Gaye Ingram of Ruston, Louisiana, made this plea:

“If possible, I would like to order ten *moschatus*, even though the limit is five. I’ve missed it every year by ordering late. Saw it decades ago and fell in love with it. I’m well past retirement age and would like to see a wee colony in my lifetime. Thank you for considering my request.”

Being soft-hearted souls, we said yes, and when she replied, Gaye told us this story:

“Thank you! I’ve pursued that particular bulb (or what I believe is that bulb) since 1968. Not even 25 years old but with degrees almost in hand, my husband and I arrived in Ruston that year to teach literature (me) and history at Louisiana Tech. We found a sweet little 1930s house on a shady street that had belonged to the mother of the chair of the Interior Design department. We felt like grown-ups!

“In spring, tiny little cream-colored daffodils with nodding heads sprang up on the lawn. I’d grown up in Central Louisiana among people whose yards and gardens were filled with passalong plants and bulbs, but I’d never seen such a demure spring bulb. I marked them and vowed to dig one or two in the fall.

“Then we moved to another place, and built a new house. I searched ever after for those quiet creamy bulbs. Went back to the place where we’d lived, but the owners had seen no bulbs. Without care and probably having their leaves mowed in late spring, they’d given up the ghost.

“The next time I saw them was in Celia’s grandmother’s garden. [Ed. note: Our good friend Celia Jones owns a small farm near Shreveport where her grandmother once grew acres of daffodils.] Celia had only a few, and knew only a local name for them. Sometime later, when I discovered Old House Gardens, I talked with Scott, but back then you didn’t offer them and he couldn’t be sure about their exact identity. More recently, whenever you did offer *moschatus* I ordered too late. (One has to discipline herself to order bulbs when it is 95 degrees with 80% humidity, as it is here today!)”

We sent Gaye’s bulbs to her last week, but we’re still not sure whether our Dutch-grown *moschatus* – or the very similar ‘[Colleen Bawn](#)’ – is exactly the same as the once widely-grown heirloom she’s seeking. Daffodils are enormously varied, and the differences don’t always show up in photos. For example, the Dutch-grown *N. jonquilla* of mainstream catalogs looks very much like the heirloom *N. jonquilla* ‘Early Louisiana’ that we offer, but the Dutch jonquils bloom weeks later and never thrive as well in Southern heat. ([Learn more here.](#))

But we're hopeful that Gaye now has the sweet little daffodil she fell in love with almost 50 years ago – and if you happen to be growing the beloved Southern heirloom known as goose-neck, swan's neck, or silver bells, we'd love to hear from you! (Nov. 2015)

Better Together: 'Carlton' and Polka-Dotted Pulmonaria

The right companion can make any plant look better, so we're always on the lookout for flattering combos. "Spring Planting Ideas" in the April 2015 issue of *Fine Gardening* offered several winning combinations including this one from the New Jersey Botanical Garden:

"Bold colors, big charm — This classic daffodil [['Carlton'](#)] is what we envision when someone says 'daffodil.' It's big, bright, and happy. Underplanting it with the speckled leaves and pink-and-purple blooms of a lungwort [*Pulmonaria*] makes it pop even more." (Oct. 2015)

Top Award-Winning Daffodils

The results are in, and here are the top award-winning Historic (pre-1940) daffodils in ADS shows across the country this past spring, with links to the ones we offer:

['Sweetness'](#) (23 awards), ['Beryl'](#) (17), ['Dreamlight'](#) (15), ['Thalia'](#) (11), ['Actaea'](#) (11), ['Saint Keverne'](#) (11), ['Mrs. Langtry'](#) (8), ['Geranium'](#) (8), ['Hawera'](#) (7), ['April Tears'](#) (6), ['Erlicheer'](#) (6), and ['Trevithian'](#) (6).

Order yours now and enjoy an award-winning spring in your own backyard! (Oct. 2015)

Campernelle Narcissus: From Slave Quarters to Lake Superior

One of our all-time best-selling bulbs is our true, American-grown [Campernelle narcissus](#). Often called the "large jonquil" in old books and catalogs, Campernelles are a naturally-occurring hybrid of *Narcissus jonquilla* (the "small jonquil") and *N. pseudonarcissus* ([Lent lily](#)) collected from the wild sometime before 1601.

In zone-8a East Texas, our good friend and daffodil expert Keith Kridler makes an interesting observation about this enduring daffodil: "One of the things I've noticed in our area is that the black slaves nearly all had Campernelles and [jonquils](#) blooming where they lived. You often find at larger plantation headquarters that the main house where the white folks lived (this part of the country was poor, so we're talking about a simple 'dog-trot' house here) has few if any daffodils, but back from the house aways and further down the spring creek, the slaves' or sharecroppers' location is marked with masses of these daffodils today."

Although they're best known and loved in the South, Campernelles also do fine for us here in zone-6a Ann Arbor — and sometimes even further north. For example, our good friend Nancy McDonald who lives near Lake Superior in zone-5a Grand Marais, Michigan, writes: "I've had your Campernelles since 1995 and they've done very well, multiplying freely. So maybe they're hardier than you think, especially in a mix of sand and old horse manure" — and when your garden is insulated by ten feet of snow every winter, as Nancy's is. (Aug. 2015)

Love Letters to Tough, Mop-Headed 'Van Sion'

"Can you tell me what this flower is?" We get asked that a lot, and if it's a daffodil, the answer is most often 'Van Sion', a 400-year-old double that's so tough it can often be found growing deep in the woods where a house disappeared ages ago.

Two of our customers loved 'Van Sion' long before we helped them identify it. Christiane Shems of zone-5b Yarmouth, Maine, ordered 25 'Van Sion' last fall, explaining:

"The first time I saw this old beauty was in my parents' yard in France. It was love at first sight, and they smelled so good. I took some bulbs back with me to the US. That was years ago and I am still enjoying them every spring. I had been looking for more since then but without luck. Nobody knew what I was talking about, until I found you. My parents have both passed away since, and these bulbs are so much more dear to me now. Thank you!"

Then in February, Marilyn Gist of zone-7b Raleigh, North Carolina, emailed to say:

"There is a daffodil that grows in a part of my yard down by the lake where it can be quite soggy, especially in winter or after a tropical storm. They were here when I moved here in 1987, and they spread and naturalize all over the place. They are very early blooming — the first one opened January 31 this year, which has been on the cold side for us. They grow in part shade in very dry areas, and they also grow in full sun right at the edge of the lake where it's quite wet, all in my red clay soil. Amazing, don't you think?"

“Not knowing what they were, I always called mine the Phyllis Diller daffodils, after her wild-looking hairstyle. I searched various bulb catalogs for them, but never found a match. Thank you so much for the [newsletter article](#) that helped me identify them as ‘Van Sion!’”

See photos and learn more at our [More About Van Sion](#) page, or [order it now](#) for planting this fall at LAST fall’s prices. (May 2015)

Brand New Daffodils in American Gardens: 1733-1940

This is a landmark book, not only because of its content but simply because it’s been published. Twenty years ago I don’t think anyone would have even considered publishing an entire book devoted to the history of daffodils in America. And yet here it is, and that in itself is a testament to the progress that’s been made in convincing people that old plants can be just as garden-worthy as new ones, and that preserving them is as important as preserving historic buildings and other relics of our cultural history.

Our friend Sara Van Beck, the book’s author, has been an advocate for historic daffodils for many years. Her late father John Van Beck, was the founder of the Florida Daffodil Society and joined with me in the late 1980s to persuade the American Daffodil Society to establish a special section for Historic Daffodils in every ADS show across the country. In *Daffodils in American Gardens*, Sara shares the wealth of information — and images — that she’s collected over the years not only from old books and nursery catalogs but from letters, diaries, periodicals, and from exploring the daffodils that survive at historic places and abandoned sites throughout the Southeast. And what a wealth it is!

Although this may not be the easiest book to read (think dissertation rather than pop fiction) and Sara and I may sometimes disagree in our interpretation of the historical record, [Daffodils in American Gardens](#) is a major work of garden-history scholarship, and I’m thrilled that it’s been published. Congratulations, Sara, and thank you! (March 2015)

New and Free: The Georgia Daffodil Society’s *Historics Handbook*

Our good customer Sara Van Beck of Atlanta has been a tireless explorer and advocate of heirloom daffodils for many years. Although her much-anticipated new book *Daffodils in American Gardens: 1733–1940* won’t be released until February, you can get a preview of some of what it’s sure to include in her recent online publication *Historics Handbook: A Short Field Guide to the Most Common Old Daffodils in the Deep and Coastal Southeast*. The 66-page booklet can be downloaded for free from the website of the Georgia Daffodil Society. There’s no direct link to it, but just go to georgiadaffodilsociety.com, click on the *Historics Handbook* link at the very top of the page, and then click on the link under the GDS address.

No matter where you live, if you’re a fan of historic daffodils you’ll find this handbook a valuable resource. Most of the daffodils in it are hardy well into zone 5, and it starts off with universally helpful sections on Characteristics of Historic Daffodils, Saving and Moving Daffodils, Rules for Rescuing, and Taking Photos for Identification. More than 50 historic varieties are pictured and described, along with many unknowns, and Sara’s descriptions are often rich in details that will help differentiate a variety from other similar daffodils. Some photos may be confusing to gardeners further north because the colors of many varieties bleach to paler yellow or even pure white in the stronger sunlight of the South, but other than that they’re generally excellent.

Although the handbook is free to view or download, the Georgia Daffodil Society is welcoming donations in support of it, and we hope you’ll be inspired to send them a check.

And remember, all of our [daffodils for the South](#) are now on sale! (Nov. 2014)

Daffodils Gone Wild: Tazettas in Japan

With their clusters of small, fragrant flowers, the group of daffodils known as tazettas have been popular for hundreds if not thousands of years. In Japan they long ago escaped gardens to make themselves at home in the wild, as described at botanyboy.org:

“*Narcissus tazetta* . . . can be found in various stages of bloom anytime from late December through February along the roadsides and fields of southern Japan. . . . *N. tazetta* is a close relative to the most famous member of the [tazetta] group, *Narcissus papyraceus*, the common paperwhite. . .

“It is the corona that gives this plant the species epithet, *tazetta*, from the Italian word *tazza*, which is a shallow wine cup on a pedestal-like base. . . . Their odor is intense, but not unpleasant, and much more floral scented than the musty smell of *N. papyraceus*. . . .

“In Japan, *N. tazetta* can be found in the warmer regions of Honshu, Kyushu, and Shikoku, but is not native. It is thought that it came from China centuries ago . . . but very likely was brought to that country in the distant past from the Near East along trading routes. In Japan it is found on roadsides, on rice paddy embankments, along rivers, and in vacant lots in both agricultural and urban environments. A number of different flower forms and hybrids are frequent garden plants in Japan and elsewhere [including ‘[Grand Primo](#)’ and ‘[Early Pearl](#)’]. The commonly grown *N. tazetta* ssp. *italicus* [‘[Minor Monarque](#)’] is in fact the hybrid between *N. tazetta* and *N. papyraceus*, the paperwhite narcissus, and is an import from Italy.

In Japanese the tazettas are called “*suisen*, meaning ‘water wizard.’ . . . This is a derivative of the Mandarin name, *shui xian hua*, meaning ‘water goddess flower.’”

Most of these “water wizards” are easy to force on pebbles and water, and they’re great in gardens from zones 6-8(10WC). See the [seven we offer here](#), and order a few now! (Oct. 2014)

See Our New Catalog Cover — Before and After

The daffodils gracing our new cover first appeared on the Sutton and Sons bulb catalog of 1890. Founded in Reading, England, in 1806, Suttons went on to become one of the world’s largest and best-known seed companies, and it’s still flourishing today. We first saw its 1890 cover image on a Christmas card from our friend Alan Shipp of the UK National Hyacinth Collection. “I thought you’d like this,” he wrote, and we did. Months later when we still hadn’t found an image from an American catalog cover that we liked as well, we asked Suttons for permission to use it. Happily they agreed, and we’re grateful for their generosity! They emailed us a scan of the original, and Mike and I went to work on it in Photoshop. You can read what we did and see [the transformation here](#). We hope you enjoy it. (Aug. 2014)

Little ‘Rip van Winkle’ “Cheers the Heart”

“I’m not especially fond of double daffodils,” says philosophy professor/garden writer Allen Lacy in *The Gardener’s Eye*, “but I make an exception for a selected form of *N. pumila plena*, which is generally listed in catalogs as ‘[Rip Van Winkle](#)’. . . . The somewhat greenish yellow petals of this small charmer open to form a rounded starburst about one and one-half inches across at the base of the flower. Just one blossom in a tiny vase cheers the heart.”

Rita, our fabulous Orders Manager, is also a big fan of this little daffodil. “It’s just sooo sweet,” she says. How so, I asked her, and after thinking a minute she added, “If ‘Rip’ were a little boy, he’d be Opie.” Because it’s small and grows so well, farmers can plant more bulbs of it per acre, making it one of our most inexpensive daffodils — which is another good reason, Rita says, to try it! (Aug. 2014)

Elizabeth Lawrence (and Friends) on the Old White Trumpets

Elizabeth Lawrence, the revered Southern garden writer, had a great interest in heirloom plants, searching for them in rural “market bulletins” and researching them in old books. In this 1971 newspaper column (later collected in *Through the Garden Gate*), she weaves together her own observations with those of fellow daffodil-lovers from almost a century before:

“Many years ago Carl Krippendorf lent me William Baylor Hartland’s *Original Little Book of Daffodils* (1887), the first catalog ever to be devoted entirely to daffodils. Hartland, an Irish nurseryman, said white trumpets were a specialty at Temple Hill, his place near Cork, and he listed nine varieties. One of these was ‘[Colleen Bawn](#)’. ‘No daffodil is more pure white,’ he said, ‘or so easily recognized by its broad twisted propeller-like perianth segments, and long cylinder-like trumpet.’ It is described in A. M. Kirby’s *Daffodils* (1907) as ‘a gem among white daffodils, silvery-white, drooping, nodding flowers; gracefully twisted petals. Best when grown in shade and grass.’

“‘Colleen Bawn’ is still with us, though extremely rare. . . . It is very like the other small trumpets of its day, the silvery swan’s neck daffodil, *Narcissus cernuus* (now called [N. moschatus](#)), and the silver bells of old gardens, but the very narrow, very long trumpet distinguishes it from the others. The trumpet is distinctly yellow though very pale, at first, and the segments are fawn color. The second day it lifts its bowed head to a horizontal position, and both trumpet and perianth become silver white. It has a delicate fragrance.

“In *One Man’s Garden*, Miles Hadfield quotes from a letter that [daffodil breeder] George Herbert Engleheart wrote about these old trumpets: ‘Away back in the 1880s and 1890s I was collecting old forms of white daffodil, chiefly from Ireland. Miss Curry — some years dead — used to hunt them up from old Irish gardens, and a small club of three or four of us used to share them. They

were all white things of the ‘Colleen Bawn’ type, but varying in size and form. They didn’t take kindly to cultivation, and are mostly, I think, lost. I made some attempt to discover their history, and came to the conclusion that Irish religious houses must have had some connection with Spain and Portugal – the focus of the white species.’

“. . . From these beginnings Engleheart developed ‘[Beersheba](#)’ (1923), still to me the most beautiful of all white trumpets, and very early, usually blooming the first week in March. Engleheart described it as a ‘miracle of stately loveliness,’ and was vexed when [daffodil breeder] P. D. Williams criticized the trumpet as 1/4 inch too long.”

Another great old white trumpet is ‘[Broughshane](#)’, although it’s sturdy and handsome rather than graceful. [See them all here](#) – and if you’re thinking of ordering ‘Colleen Bawn’, we encourage you to do it NOW because savvy gardeners have already snapped up over half of our very small supply for this fall. (July 2014)

Eternal Spring in Alabama

A hand-written letter arrived here earlier this spring from our good customer Carolyn Brown of Creola, Alabama, and it was so joyful and inspiring, we wanted to share it with you:

“How I wish you could see your beauties in my colonial garden,” Carolyn writes. “My breath catches as I gaze upon the beauty. Why so few people here in the South have bulbs, I’ll never understand. As the daffies sway in the wind I’m reminded of Wordsworth’s poem “Daffodils.” How excellent a description it is.

“In your eighties, each day is more joyful than the day before, and the daffodils are prettier each day. I do hope God has daffies in heaven and I can plant acres and acres of them.

“My husband, Bob, has always said vintage roses are his favorite flower. He has around 150 this year. However he said my bulbs are getting to be his favorite, and they are far less work. In fact, he urged me to make this order [for the coming fall]. I try your smallest amount first and see how they do here and then I go for a larger amount. I’m going to start on hyacinths next.

“Give the little dog a pat and a rub for me. Keep up your good work and save as many bulbs as you can. And thank you all for giving an 80+ gal a wonderful life and joy with the beautiful – as my husband calls them – ‘daffy-down-dillies.’

“Your Garden Pal, Carolyn B.” (May 2014)

More Praise for the Bulb-Building Power of Stems

Our friend Carl Van Staalduinen’s family has been farming daffodils and other bulbs at their Terra Ceia Farms in North Carolina since the 1940s. After reading last month’s article about the bulb-building value of stems, Carl emailed us with his expert perspective:

“I couldn’t resist replying to your article since we used to cut hundreds of thousands of daffodils for supermarkets in the Northeast. My dad always explained bulb flower production this way: ‘Anything green is doing photosynthesis – the more green, the more sun energy is converted into stored sugar – the more stored sugar, the bigger the bulb – the bigger the bulb, the bigger the bloom.’ Sorry for my punctuation but he always said this in one sentence preceded by an audible, deep breath!

“I like to explain it this way: Think of the green parts of the plant as a solar collector – but the leaves are only two-dimensional while the stems are three-dimensional. In the short time that a daffodil has to recuperate from blooming, make seed and, finally, produce next year’s flower buds, the additional surface area for photosynthesis that the stem provides can make a huge difference in sugar-converting potential. This underscores why it is important to leave stems on the plant if at all possible – and also why dead-heading is a good idea since it reduces ‘energy consumption.’” (late April 2014)

To Build Up Your Daffodil Bulbs, Does 1 Stem = 4 Leaves?

“Leave those leaves alone” – that’s one of our bulb-growing mantras. But an article in the March 2012 *Daffodil Journal* explains that, for more bulbs and future blooms, what you do with the stems is also important. Daffodil breeder Peter Ramsay of New Zealand writes:

“My old Dad used to lecture me constantly on the virtue of looking after leaves. He growled at me when I would bend some of the leaves over so that they didn’t rub against flowers. He also favored dead-heading flowers, claiming the stem was worth four times the value of one leaf [and] that letting daffodils go to seed was similar to pregnancy and it could sap energy. . . .

“Last year I posted Dad’s claim on Daffnet Some of the replies were very interesting. [Irish daffodil breeder] Brian Duncan commented, ‘I’ve long been one to accept that a stem can have a significantly greater effect than a single leaf. I think possible reasons for [this] are: stems are often . . . longer than leaves [and therefore] less shaded; stems are rounded and stand more vertically than leaves, thus being more exposed to sun from sunrise to sunset; and stems usually stay green longer than leaves. . . .’

“Ted Snazelle, a research scientist, added . . . ‘Deadheading is important. Otherwise a fruit (seed capsule) might develop; fruits are said to be “sinks” for sugar. Thus less sugar would be available to transport down into the bulb and ultimately less sugar for the carbon compounds and energy required to make a new flower.’

“So there we have it — scientific explanations and the observations of one of the world’s best exhibitors support Dad’s views.” (April 2014)

French Jonquils: Did “Early Louisiana” Get its Start in New Orleans?

Our heirloom [“Early Louisiana” jonquils](#) are a wonderfully fragrant, unusually vigorous form of *N. jonquilla* that blooms weeks earlier than the ones sold by mainstream sources — but why? The late Carl Amason, founder of the Arkansas Daffodil Society and a great mentor for me when I first got interested in old daffodils 30 years ago, offered an intriguing answer in the March 2012 edition of *The Daffodil Journal*.

Carl lived on the old family homestead in southern Arkansas, and four very old daffodils flourished there: Twin Sisters, Butter and Eggs, Buttercups (the original trumpet daffodil, aka Lent lily), and jonquils — which he described as “a strain of *Narcissus jonquilla* which was vigorous, prolific to self sow,” and had a fragrance that would “make a statement,” especially “by moonlight on a warm night.”

But, he wrote, “I was frequently asked why some jonquil plantings were much earlier and more vigorous than others.” At first he “assumed that the more vigorous . . . were growing in established places with good soil and more sun.” Later he realized “there were two or more distinct strains of *N. jonquilla*, and that was the primary reason for the differences.” The earlier-blooming strain was what he “came to call the French jonquil, to distinguish it from the English jonquil that bloomed a month later.” This strong-growing French strain “has become naturalized in north Louisiana, south Arkansas, and east Texas,” he wrote, but it’s not as common further east where the less vigorous strain “that came with the English speaking peoples from Virginia and the Carolinas” predominates. “Evidently,” he concluded, “the New Orleans settlers brought the earlier French strain upriver to Arkansas and east Texas.”

Native to Spain and Portugal, *N. jonquilla* has been naturalized in the nearby south of France for a very long time. Like many wild plants, it’s a highly variable species, and it’s reasonable to believe that centuries ago earlier-blooming strains were favored by gardeners along the sunny Mediterranean in France, while later-blooming strains were preferred in the more northerly British Isles — and the bulb fields of the Netherlands — where spring comes later and early flowers would be more likely to be damaged by late frosts. Carl’s French/English dichotomy also helps to explain why virtually all modern hybrid jonquils are later blooming. As he wrote, “The English strain was what the hybridizers, mostly British, used in their work because it was only natural for them to use what was readily available.”

“This is all speculation on my part,” he added, but his conclusions make sense to me. Today the English strain is widely offered by mainstream bulb-sellers, but if you want the vigorous, early-blooming, richly fragrant, [heirloom French strain](#) — grown for us in east Texas — we’d be glad to help you out. (March 2014)

Historic and Classic Daffodils Win Big at Shows

Time-tested daffodils were among the biggest award-winners at daffodil shows across the country this past spring. In fact, as Bob Spotts and Melissa Read reported recently in the ADS *Daffodil Journal*, 12 of the 21 top award-winners this year were classified as either Historic or Classic daffodils. Although ADS awards are based on the perfection of individual flowers, not overall garden-worthiness, and the most commonly grown varieties tend to win the most awards, you might like to add some of these award-winners to your garden this fall.

A special section for Historic, Pre-1940 daffodils was established by the ADS in 2001 (at the urging of a group of enthusiasts that I’m proud to have led). This past spring, 99 different cultivars won awards in the Historic section, and six were among the top 21 award-winners:

[‘Sweetness’](#), 1939 (23 awards),
[‘Beryl’](#), 1907 (19),
[‘Hawera’](#), 1928 (15),
Actaea, 1919 (14),
[‘Erlicheer’](#), 1934 (12), and
[‘Saint Keverne’](#), 1934 (12).
[‘Thalia’](#), 1916, was close behind with 10 awards, and several other Historics won five or more awards: [‘Trevithian’](#) (8), [‘Daphne’](#) (6), [‘White Lady’](#) (6), [‘Avalanche’](#) (5), ‘Limerick’ (5), [‘Queen of the North’](#) (5), and ‘Trousseau’ (5).

In 2012, the ADS added a section for Classic, 1940-1969 daffodils, and this past spring 155 different cultivars won awards in it, including six of the top 21: ‘Tete-a-Tete’ 1949 (19 awards), ‘Snipe’, 1948 (18), ‘Ceylon’, 1943 (16), ‘Minnow’, 1962 (16), ‘Jetfire’, 1966 (14), and ‘Segovia’, 1962 (14). (late Oct. 2013)

Got Deer? “Daffodils are the Secret”

In her wonderful book *Gardening for a Lifetime*, Sydney Eddison writes about naturalizing daffodils in a meadow and young woodland, outside her garden fence but untouched by deer:

“I have begun working on . . . an extension of the garden that will be beautiful and require no attention whatsoever. Daffodils are the secret. To digress briefly, when I began planting daffodils in the field, my helper was our first Jack Russell terrier puppy. It was slow going. Besides the difficulty of digging into the rough, rocky hillside, I had to keep an eye on Abby.

“Suddenly a doe bounded through the field behind us. For a second the puppy froze, and then she was off like a shot. Being fleet of foot in those days, I managed to catch her, but that was the end of daffodil planting for the day. Every year since, I have added to the planting, but last fall Erica [Sydney’s garden helper] did most of the work, putting in about a dozen new clumps, with six or seven bulbs in each hole. It was wonderful in April! Looking out over the top of the computer . . . all I could see was waves of daffodils sweeping farther and farther up the hillside.

“Since that single doe dashed past Abby almost thirty years ago, the deer population has exploded, and the forest shelters an expanding herd . . . but they don’t touch daffodils. So once planted, these hardy bulbs require no protection and no care. . . .

“The new daffodil project involves a part of the field that proved too steep and rocky to mow. Tree seedlings colonized the slope and have now become strong saplings and young trees. I’m going to have them thinned out, and then we can start a new planting of daffodils among the trees. In time, I will have a carefree new woodland garden that I can see without setting a foot out of doors.” (Aug. 2013)

Will the Real John Horsefield Please Stand Up?

We work hard to make sure our bulbs are right and our facts are straight. That’s why we were happy to get this email recently from Nick Ritchie of the UK:

“I’d like to point out a mistake in your description of *Narcissus* [‘Horsfieldii’](#). John Horsefield was a Lancashire handloom weaver, not a Scottish shoemaker. He lived and died a pauper but gained some fame in his lifetime, although he’s now sadly forgotten by most. We’ve tried to rectify this by giving an accurate account of his life in Wikipedia, along with his friend, amateur botanist Richard Buxton who actually was a shoemaker.”

A half-hour of research in 19th-century publications with the help of Google Books verified that Nick was right, and we’ve corrected the mistake in our description of ‘Horsfieldii’. Thanks, Nick! (May 2013)

Extra Bulbs? Jane Says Plant Easy Baskets for Your Front Steps or Patio

When our good customer Jane Baldwin of zone-6a Moreland Hills, Ohio, found herself with surplus bulbs late one fall, she improvised an easy solution that ended up delighting her. “A couple of years ago,” she writes, “I got caught by early snow so I planted the last of my daffodils in baskets. It looked fabulous and I highly recommend this to anyone, even if you’re not in the same predicament. In fact, it’s how I’m planting most of the daffs I ordered from you this fall.

“The baskets were just ones I found in the garage here when we moved in. [If you don’t have any in your garage, thrift shops often sell them for a dollar or two.] They were nothing fancy, older and

seasoned by years of use, approximately 6 inches deep and 1-3 feet across. I put a few inches of good potting soil in them and then planted the bulbs right smack against one another with their tips just barely covered by the soil. Smaller-flowered varieties such as [‘Thalia’](#) went in the smaller baskets and bigger ones such as [‘Carlton’](#) in the bigger baskets.

“I put them in our attached, unheated garage so they would get the necessary cold and watered them at first, but eventually the soil froze. At the end of winter when it started to thaw, I brought the baskets out on the patio to a sunny spot where they bloomed to perfection. Even though there was only 2-3 inches of soil under the bulbs and they were planted right next to each other, they performed just fine and looked exquisite in the baskets for a good long time out there. It was really very easy, and even our chipmunks and squirrels left them alone.

“At the end of spring I took the bulbs out of the baskets and kept them dry over the summer in the garage. Now they are planted on a hillside along my driveway where they continue to bloom beautifully — and every fall I plant more in baskets.” (Nov. 2012)

Learn more at our [Growing Bulbs in Pots](#).

Silver Bells, Presbyterian Sisters, and Eudora Welty

The small white daffodil known as Silver Bells, Swan’s Neck, or Goose Neck has been a cherished favorite in Southern gardens for a very long time. Author Eudora Welty and her mother grew it in their Mississippi garden, and she wrote about it in her Pulitzer Prize-winning novel, *The Optimist’s Daughter*, as Susan Haltom and Jane Roy Brown explain in their excellent [One Writer’s Garden](#):

“Welty loved [‘Silver Bells’ daffodils](#), ‘the nodding, gray-white kind with the square cup’ that a family friend brings to the funeral in Laurel’s father’s house in *The Optimist’s Daughter*. ‘You know who gave me mine — hers are blooming outside,’ the friend says to Laurel, alluding to Becky [Laurel’s mother] having shared the daffodil bulbs in typical pass-along fashion. Years after her death, Becky’s gesture has circled back to comfort her daughter. Daffodils blooming in fields or woods throughout the South often mark the sites of bygone houses, where they traditionally lined the front walk. These flowers also may have reminded Welty of Elizabeth Lawrence, who also preferred white daffodils.”

Another favorite in the Welty garden was the fragrant, cluster-flowered narcissus [‘Avalanche’](#) which Eudora called Presbyterian Sisters “because they hang together.” Welty’s home has recently been restored and opened to the public as a museum, and we’re proud to have supplied the daffodils, [Roman hyacinths](#), [oxblood lilies](#), [tuberoses](#), dahlias, glads, and other bulbs that once again grow in her garden. (Oct. 2012)

[‘Carlton’ Blooms Happily in a Bowl of Pebbles, Too](#)

Gardeners understand better than most people the joy of anticipation, so we figured July would be a good time to share with you this tip for winter bloom:

Every fall we plant daffodils in pots of soil and force them into bloom to brighten up the dreary days of our long Michigan winter. (Are you feeling any cooler yet?) Last November we tried something different: forcing the classic yellow daffodil ‘Carlton’ on pebbles as if it were a paperwhite. We carefully chilled five bulbs in the refrigerator until January and then set them on a bed of pebbles, kept them watered, and waited hopefully. After a couple of weeks they bloomed beautifully. The nice, fat bulbs sent up ten gorgeous yellow blooms (a bit paler than when they bloom outdoors) and they lasted a full week. We all kept wandering over to enjoy their subtle fragrance, which is a nice change from the more powerful scent of paperwhites and other tazettas. Although we knew that ‘Carlton’ forced well in pots (we’ve done this for years), we were pleasantly surprised to discover that they force just as happily on pebbles.

Learn more about forcing all sorts of bulbs at [oldhousegardens.com/ForcingBulbs](#). (July 2012)

Getting Old Daffodils to Bloom Again: “Separation Did the Trick!”

In many parts of the country, daffodils bloom every spring in ditches, cow pastures, vacant lots, and other neglected areas where long-forgotten homes once stood. Dig a clump and you’ll often find a crowded mass of small, under-nourished bulbs with only a few that have managed to size up enough to bloom. In your own garden, the same thing can happen to long-established clumps, and the remedies in both cases are the same: fertilize, provide more sunlight, and when all else fails, dig and divide — as our friend Les Turner discovered:

“I found clumps of daffodil foliage in the thick woods near one of the rivers in eastern North Carolina that was home to early settlers in the 1600s. Maybe one or two flowers in each clump. With your help we determined they were [‘Van Sion’](#) and [‘Twin Sisters’](#). My wife and I moved the bulbs out of the woods and replanted the clumps on our property near the river with more sunlight. For the next two years, we got about the same results as in the forest, one or two flowers per clump. So we decided to separate the bulbs to get more flowers. We planted one bulb every six inches and this year we had hundreds of flowers and they look very healthy and beautiful. Separation did the trick!” (April 2012)

Two Old Daffodils Delight New Customer

After Donna Jarrow’s first bulbs from us bloomed in her zone-7, Palmyra, Virginia garden, she wrote us happily:

“Your bulbs were the biggest I’ve seen! [‘April Queen’](#) was a real show stopper — HUGE blooms, very strong stems, and it lasted a long time. But, being a purist, nothing is more beautiful to me than my [‘Carlton’](#) . . . pure deep yellow daffs. Mine are in one of the hottest parts of the yard and bloom for four weeks MINIMUM. The greens last a very long time, too, which I love.”

Donna also had some good advice: “I am against braiding the greens or folding them over and using rubbers bands or string to keep them tidy. Sun needs to hit all parts of the leaves so they can suck in as much energy as possible for the following year’s booms. People who need NEAT gardens should live in apartments!” (Sept. 2010)

ADS Offers Rare 1930s Daffodil Yearbooks on CD

Fans of historic daffodils will be happy to hear that four rare volumes of *The American Daffodil Year Book* from 1935-1938 are now available on CD. The 300-plus pages of text include a wide variety of articles such as “In Praise of Old Daffodils,” “Daffodils in Texas,” “Naturalizing Narcissi,” and — our personal favorite — “A Daffodil Parade in Michigan.” Even better, the full 325 pages are completely searchable. That means if you want to find references to, say, [‘Argent’](#); or fragrance or daffodils for the South, just type those words into the search box and *voilà!*

A collaborative effort by the American Horticultural Society and the American Daffodil Society, the four-volume CD is available from the [ADS website](#) for just \$10 — and worth every penny. (Aug. 2010)

Narcissus Stamps to Celebrate Year of the Tiger

For centuries, cluster-flowered tazetta narcissus much like our [‘Grand Primo’](#) and [‘Avalanche’](#) have been an important part of New Year’s festivities in Asia. Their gold cups symbolize wealth, and if they bloom on New Year’s Day, it’s said you’ll have luck and prosperity throughout the year. To celebrate New Year’s Day for the year 4707 which is coming up February 14, the post office is issuing a bright red [44-cent stamp](#) decorated with these traditional narcissus. Take a look! (Jan. 2010)

Breaking News: ‘Dreamlight’ Wins Daffodil Society’s Top Honor

The Wister Award is a lot like the Oscar for Lifetime Achievement, a rare honor that goes only to those who have proven their excellence over the long run. And this year’s winner is . . . [‘Dreamlight’](#)! A favorite of savvy gardeners since 1934, this glamorous beauty has a flat, rippled cup of champagne-white ringed with apricot. (Unfortunately we’re sold out for this fall but you can order it for NEXT fall — at no increase in price — starting the day after Thanksgiving.) Also winning the Award this year were ‘Sun Disc’ (1946) and ‘Misty Glen’ (1976). For a list of all 29 previous honorees (including [‘Saint Keverne’](#) and [‘Sweetness’](#)), go to daffodilusa.org/references/wister.html. (Nov. 2009)

Triumphing Over Adversity: Mighty ‘Carlton’

We have a saying here at Old House Gardens: “Bulbs want to grow.” By that we mean they’re amazingly resilient if you give them half a chance — as you’ll see in this story from our friend Kit Steinaway:

“In October a couple of years ago I sent 50 [‘Carlton’ daffodils](#) to Syracuse, NY, to be planted in the wooded backyard of my friend for her 50th birthday the following April. Her husband was going to plant them while she was gone, and their blooming would be her surprise gift. Along with the bulbs I sent instructions, and her husband successfully planted a huge bag of bulbs in the backyard

(with only two phone calls to me for additional guidance). In April they bloomed and my friend was thrilled with the surprise. End of story? Not quite . . .

“When I visited their home in August that same year, the husband pulled me aside and sheepishly admitted that he had recently found something in the garage — a second bag of ‘Carlton’ bulbs. They had been stuck in a corner of the garage for nine months! Since they still felt firm and heavy, we went ahead and planted them in another part of the yard, without much hope. In May my friend reported that all were blooming beautifully.

“When you tell people that these babies want to grow, you are not kidding!” (August 2009)

Capturing the Fragrance of Jonquils

Ken Druse does his best to capture one of history’s best-loved floral fragrances in this excerpt from his always interesting email newsletter, [Real Dirt](#):

“The sweetest of the daffodil relatives for fragrance is the species *Narcissus jonquilla*, the [true jonquil](#) [often called “Sweeties” and “Cologne Bottle”]. Where the paperwhite is heavy, the jonquil is delicate. There is a faint fragrance of the other daffodils, but with a cool honeysuckle note and the barest hint of lemon and spice. The jonquil reminds me of linen drying on the clothesline, with honeysuckle and a top note of sweet butter.” (August 2009)

March 1, Wear a Daffodil (or Leek!) for St. David of Wales

While researching daffodil history, we stumbled upon this interesting bit at [Wikipedia.com](#):

“Saint David’s Day . . . is the feast day of Saint David, the patron saint of Wales, and falls on March 1 each year. The date . . . was chosen in remembrance of the death of Saint David on that day in 589, and has been celebrated . . . since then. The date was declared a national day of celebration . . . in the 18th century.

“On this day many Welsh people wear one or both of the national emblems of Wales on their lapel to celebrate: the daffodil (a generic Welsh symbol . . .) or the leek (Saint David’s personal symbol). The association between leeks and daffodils is strengthened by the fact that they have similar names in Welsh, *cenin* (leek) and *cenin Bedr* (daffodil, literally “Peter’s leek”).

“In south Wales males usually wear leeks while young girls wear daffodils; in the north the daffodil predominates.” (Feb. 2009)

Daffodil Shows Start March 7, National Show in Chicago in April

For a heaping, soul-satisfying helping of daffodil beauty and diversity, make plans to visit an American Daffodil Society show this spring. Forty-two shows, free and open to the public, are scheduled all across the country, starting with the Texas and Northern California shows March 7-8 and ending with the show in West Boylston, MA, May 3-4. For a complete listing, see the “Events and Show Schedule” at [daffodilusa.org/events/show.html](#).

Biggest and grandest of all is the National Show April 25-27 at the Chicago Botanic Garden. Over 1000 blooms will be in the competition, including — as in most local shows — a whole section devoted to Historic Pre-1940 Daffodils. Outside, thousands of daffodils will be blooming, including 50-100 each of eight different heirlooms we donated to the Garden last fall in celebration of the show. For more info, visit [ads2009convention.org](#). (Feb. 2009)

Proof that Spring is Coming

For those of you shivering in the grip of Arctic cold, here’s a preview of what’s sure to reach us all before long: Spring, glorious, unstoppable spring.

On January 9 our terrific Louisiana grower sent us a [photo of his Minor Monarque](#) narcissus in full bloom under his pecan trees. “The first one bloomed on Dec. 11,” he wrote, “and this week they are just past their peak. [Early Pearl](#) are a week behind them, and the [Campernelles](#) are just starting to bloom now.” Woo-hoo! (Jan. 2009)

“Tranquils” and Other Flower “Gifts from a Previous Century”

In this excerpt from [Animal, Vegetable, Miracle](#), Kingsolver describes what is most likely [Narcissus pseudonarcissus](#), the early yellow trumpet daffodil of the South — and reveals herself as a kindred spirit to heirloom-flower lovers everywhere:

“The greatest rewards of living in an old farmhouse are the stories and the gardens, if they’re still intact in any form. We are lucky enough to have both. The banks all around us are crowded with flowering shrubs and hummocks of perennial bulbs that never fail to please and startle us, like old friends leaping from behind the furniture to yell, ‘Surprise!’ These flowers are gifts from a previous century, a previous dweller here — a tale, told in flowers, of one farm wife’s fondness for beauty and this place.

“In a few more months we’d be drunk on the scent of Lizzie Webb’s mock oranges and lilacs, but the show begins modestly in April with her tiny Lenten roses, white-petaled snowdrops, and the wildish little daffodils called jonquils that have naturalized all over the grassy slopes. As Lily and I walked single file up the path to the greenhouse, I noticed these were up, poking their snub, yellow-tipped noses through a fringe of leaves.

“Oh, Mama,’ Lily cried, ‘look what’s about to bloom — the *tranquils*.’ There went the last of the needles of ice around my heart, and I understood I’d be doomed to calling the jonquils *tranquils* for the rest of my days. Lily is my youngest. Maybe you know how these things go. In our family, those pink birds with the long necks are called *flingmos* because of how their real name was cutely jumbled by my brother’s youngest child — and that was, yikes, twenty years ago.” (Jan. 2009)

Do Animals Eat Your Bulbs? Try These!

For a quick list of bulbs that animals rarely eat, click the “Animal Resistant” box at our easy [Advanced Bulb Search](#).

[Daffodils](#) and [snowflakes](#) (*Leucojum*) are usually completely animal-proof, and other bulbs that most animals won’t touch include [alliums](#), *Camassia*, [glory-of-the-snow](#) (*Chionodoxa*), *Colchicum*, [Crocus tommasinianus](#), [winter aconite](#) (*Eranthis*), crown imperials, [snowdrops](#) (*Galanthus*), [hyacinths](#), [Spanish bluebells](#) (*Hyacinthoides*), *Ipheion*, [grape hyacinths](#) (*Muscari*), [silver bells](#) (*Ornithogalum nutans*), and [Scilla siberica](#).

Tulips and lilies, unfortunately, are a favorite on most animal menus. For tips on keeping them safe, see [“Protecting from Animals”](#) in our online Planting and Care. (Oct. 2008)

That Was Then: Picking Daffodils for a Nickel

In a fascinating article titled “Daffodils, Pears, Melons, and More” in the spring 2007 issue of *The Illinois Steward*, Judith Joy writes:

98-year-old Mary Winks Weeks “still remembers the old days when the fields around Alma [Illinois] were covered with golden daffodils. When the flowers were in bloom, school was delayed so that the children could harvest the daffodils at the peak of freshness. The children were paid according to their size. ‘I was small for my age, so I got put in the nickel bunch,’ Mrs. Weeks recalled. Asked if she got a nickel for each bunch of flowers, she answered that the nickel was for the morning’s work.

“After the children went off to school, the women in the packing shed sorted the daffodils and packed them — 13 to a bunch — in cardboard cartons for shipment to the Water Street Market in Chicago. By planting a number of different varieties, growers extended the season from the first [King Alfreds](#) to the later blooming Narcissus type [probably [N. poeticus recurvus](#)]. The early bloomers were called Easter Flowers, the name still used by many local people, and the later ones were known as Mother’s Day Flowers.”

Mrs. Weeks’ grandfather was the first daffodil farmer in the area, starting with the classic [‘Emperor’](#) sometime around World War I. “At one time, 65 to 75 acres in Alma were devoted to daffodils, and . . . in addition to the 40 to 50 children who picked daffodils each morning, 100 women sorted and packed the flowers for shipment. . . .

“One of Alma’s last daffodil growers was Mrs. Weeks’ brother, Eugene Winks. When interviewed in 1979 he said the business declined because ‘high school kids today are too lazy to pick, . . . the Railway Express Company went out of business, and . . . there are no more street peddlers.’ For many years, Winks operated a small roadside market in Alma, and when he died in 1995, it was the end of an era.” (Sept. 2008)

Blue-Ribbon Winning Historic Daffodils

Congratulations to our good customer Raymond Rogers of North Brunswick, New Jersey, who writes:

“I won five individual blue ribbons at two American Daffodil Society shows this past spring, as well as Best Historic, Best Vase of Three Historics, and Best Collection of Five Historics, with

[Beersheba](#), [Mary Copeland](#), and [Queen of the North](#), all from you. Keep 'em coming!" (Aug. 2008)

Your Garden Memories: From New Mother to Retirement with Mrs. Austin's Jonquils

Our good customer Frances Rogers of Bedford, Texas, writes:

"When I was a young mother, my mother and I would often take my baby daughter for a drive, and there was one place in the spring that my mother showed me where there was a whole field of beautiful yellow jonquils, a truly awesome sight. The field was owned by the elderly lady, Mrs. Austin, who lived next door to it in an elderly house. I wanted very much to have some of those flowers, so we stopped and introduced ourselves and asked if she would sell some of the bulbs. This was way back before I became the fanatic gardener I am today.

"Well, first Mrs. Austin said to come back at a particular date, and then she changed her mind, and it took about two years for her to settle on the date when we could come to get the bulbs. By that time, we now had a baby son as well as a toddler. My poor long-suffering husband was going to school part time and working full time, but nevertheless on the appointed day he took me to see Mrs. Austin and get the bulbs.

"We had a very limited budget and I knew I could only buy a few. Well, it turned out that the man who usually dug Mrs. Austin's bulbs had not shown up, so my dear husband, on a hot Texas June day, not only dug almost a whole row of bulbs, but also had the honor of buying some for me, a dollar's worth, at 5 cents a bulb!

"Of course, those bulbs thrived and bloomed. They went with us to the country home we moved to and lived at for over twenty-eight years, they multiplied amazingly, and some went to friends and neighbors. I always called them Mrs. Austin's jonquils. When we moved from our old home place, I made sure that some of the bulbs were securely growing at my daughter's home, then brought them to our retirement home.

"Eventually I bought some [Campernelles](#), and guess what! THEY are Mrs. Austin's jonquils! So we have the 'new' Campernelles, but we also have a cherished group of the original Mrs. Austin's. And I have to say that Mrs. Austin, with all her interesting ways, made it possible for me to spend every winter waiting for emerging bulb shoots, and every spring not only enjoying these wonderful bulbs, but also the memory of the little old lady who started my enthusiasm, which has now grown all out of bounds. Thank goodness.

"P.S. My husband is still digging for me! He's really a nice man." (Jul. 2008)

DaffSeek.org Offers Thousands of Photos, Wants Yours

[DaffSeek.org](#) is a great place to see and learn about thousands of daffodils. Sponsored by the American Daffodil Society, this simple website includes some 18,000 varieties that visitors can search by name, type, date, color, bloom season, and other criteria. Enter "1914," for example, and you'll get a list of 54 introduced that year, with photos of 12 including the charming '[Daphne](#)' which we'll be offering in our new catalog.

When the folks at DaffSeek asked to use 50 of our photos, we were happy to oblige. You can help, too, by sending clear, close-up photos to site-master Nancy Tackett at nancyt@netvista.net. She asks that you please:

1. Take more than one photo of the same flower but from different angles such as front, side, etc.
2. Send JPG files only, and in the original or highest possible resolution.
3. For the filename, use the name of the daffodil as it appears in DaffSeek -- for example Grand Primo.jpg.
4. If you send multiple photos of one variety, put a comma and ver# after the name -- for example Sir Watkin, ver2.jpg .

170 photographers from fifteen countries have already contributed photos to DaffSeek. Yours could be there, too, enjoyed and appreciated by daffodil enthusiasts around the world! (April 2008)

Ugly Little Buggers: Daffodil Bulb Fly

Deer-proof and rodent-proof, daffodils have only one pest that troubles them, the elusive daffodil bulb fly. And late spring is when it shows up in the garden. To learn more, visit our new web-page at oldhousegardens.com/DaffodilFly.asp . (April 2008)

Spring Starts with Stinky Narcissus

Spring has sprung for many of you (we're jealous!), and your [tazettas](#) may already be blooming. These cluster-flowered narcissus include paperwhites which are often forced on pebbles for winter bloom. Some gardeners love their rich fragrance, and others can't stand it.

Our California friend and tazetta expert, Bill Welch, explains, "About a quarter of the population cannot stand the scent of paperwhites, and that has poisoned their attitude towards the tazettas as a whole. Someone I know was doing a study of the chemical components of fragrance in various flowers, and he found that paperwhites had a lot more indole in them than other tazettas. Then he told me that indole is the same chemical given off by *E. coli*! Of course I don't usually mention this to people who like paperwhites and ask if the others 'smell as good'!"

On the other side of the fence, our Texas friend, Greg Grant, writes: "I love the smell of all narcissus including paperwhites. Living on a farm however, the 'manure' tinge doesn't affect me, I guess. Not everybody thinks it smells like manure. A new gardener I worked with said, 'Ooh, smells like pee pee!' The general rule is the more yellow in the flower (cups or petals) the better the scent (inherited from *Narcissus tazetta orientalis*) and the more white, the more 'manure' the scent (inherited from *N. papyraceous*)." (Feb. 2008)

Campernelles and Heaven

Known since colonial days as the "large jonquil," [Campernelle](#) narcissus are memorably fragrant — as our good customer Jan Ayers of Plano, Texas, makes clear:

"When I saw the Campernelles you offer, I knew I had rediscovered my first childhood love! We had a whole row of those in our yard. I believe that if I can smell them as I die, I'll go straight to heaven." (Aug 2007)

"Mardi Gras Lilies" Lead Spring's Parade

"Mardi Gras lilies are nodding in the warm breeze," Bill Finch wrote in the *Mobile Press-Register* February 2, giving a new name to a very old jonquil. "I can't remember a Joe Cain Day when the [Campernelle daffodils](#) weren't nodding in the wind — which is why they are our own special Mardi Gras lilies. As is the case throughout the South, the blooming of the Campernelles is a signal that spring has just begun." (June 2007)

That's Not a Weed, It's a Historic Daffodil!

Last weekend our friend Russell Studebaker led his annual [tour of historic daffodils](#) that survive at old cemeteries and other relic sites in rural Oklahoma. He writes:

"I thought you might be interested in a comment from Saturday's tour. We had stopped at the site where there are so many ['Butter and Eggs'](#), and a lady who had taken last year's tour with her father told me that after he saw those last year and learned their name and heritage, he stopped digging them up and throwing them away from his garden!" (March 2007)

Pickled Paperwhites Stand Up Straighter

To prevent your paperwhites from getting tall and floppy, give them a good stiff drink. It's true! Scientific testing by Professor Bill Miller of Cornell's Flower Bulb Research Program confirmed that paperwhites grown in water with a 5% concentration of alcohol bloomed beautifully on stems one-third shorter than teetotaling paperwhites. Since most liquors are about 40% alcohol, that works out to 1 part booze to 7 parts water. Gin, vodka, whiskey, rum, and tequila all work well, but Miller cautions that, just as with humans, too much alcohol is disastrous. To read his entire entertaining report, [click here](#). (Dec. 2006)

A Promising New Cure for Dementia: Daffodils

Daffodils and dementia are two topics close to our hearts here at OHG. So when a friend sent us an article titled "Scientists hope daffodil crop will help tackle dementia," we knew we had to share it with you! For this fascinating story about Welsh farmers, modern medicine, and hope, go to www.guardian.co.uk/medicine/story/0,,1724358,00.html. (June 2006)

An Expert Says: For Tough Southern Daffs, Start with St. Keverne

Mississippi daffodil expert Ted Snazelle writing in the March 2006 edition of the [American Daffodil Society's Daffodil Journal](#) had this advice for modern hybridizers:

"Where does a Southerner begin in hybridizing daffodil reverse bicolors which are both resistant to the narcissus basal rot fungus [common in the South] and also of exhibition quality? I think one should look to cultivars which have 'St. Keverne' (1934, 2 Y-Y) in their pedigree or to 'St. Keverne' itself. 'St. Keverne' was used in hybridizing by the late Barbara Frye of Rosewarne because 'many of the progeny acquired valuable basal rot resistance, upright bud, and good stem.'" (June 2006)

Horace: Read the Poet, Plant the Daffodil

Many historic pheasant's-eye or poet's narcissus are named for poets, including our latest addition, '[Horace](#)', from 1894. The roman poet Horace lived from 65-8 BCE and often celebrated rural pleasures in his work. Here's a snippet from his *Odes* (2.11).

Why don't we lie beneath the tall plane tree
or the pine, just as we are, and crown our white hair
with fragrant roses, and anoint ourselves
with Assyrian perfume, and drink, while we may? (2006-07 catalog)

'Little Darlings' Offer "Heavenly" Perfume

Our good customer Emmy Morrison of Davidson, NC, writes:

"My [N. jonquilla](#) '[Early Louisiana](#)' have multiplied and are heavenly. Three stems in a vase scented our entire kitchen. I call them 'Little Darlings,' a name I picked up in Natchez." (2006-07 catalog)

Posh UK Magazine Spotlights Heirloom Daffs and Our Friend Josephine

The headline on the cover of the current *Gardens Illustrated*, the upscale British monthly, definitely caught our eye: "Heirloom Daffodils, Rescuing Forgotten Bulbs." Inside, six pages are devoted to our good friend Josephine Dekker and her centuries-old farm in North Holland where she is collecting and propagating exactly the sort of daffodils we love.

In fact, we're proud to be the only US source for Josephine's treasures. (And we got a kick out of *Gardens Illustrated* calling us THE Old House Gardens. It sounds much more distinguished, don't you think?) You can pick up the April issue at many US bookstores and newsstands right now. (March 2006)

[To learn more about Josephine, [click here](#).]

Hot and Dry? Try These Daffodils!

When the American Daffodil Society met in Dallas a couple of years ago, our friend Phil Huey gave a talk on daffodils for public plantings. Varieties he recommended as thriving in warm climates even without irrigation included our [Erlicheer](#), [Grand Primo](#), and [Trevithian](#), along with heirloom February Gold, Fortune, Golden Dawn, Ice Follies, and Peeping Tom, and modern Dik Dik, Eclat, High Note, Pink Declaration, Pipit, Quail, and White Magnolia. (Sept. 2005)

Ukraine Protects Valley of the Narcissus

Since the beginning of time, millions of wild pheasant's-eye narcissus (close cousins to our [N. poeticus recurvus](#) and '[Ornatus](#)') have been blooming every spring in a valley in Ukraine. As farming and other development encroached on this vast paradise, more and more of these richly fragrant flowers were plowed under or paved over. Eventually local conservationists mounted a "Save the Narcissus" campaign and now 643 acres are protected as part of a national park. We hear it's an awesome sight in bloom, but if you go, be careful: the accumulated fragrance can be literally dizzying. For photos and more, visit www.wumag.kiev.ua/index2.php?param=pgs20051/104. (July 2005)

Daffodils for Florida, Arizona, and Other Hot Places

Many of our Southern friends have snapped up the new [Daffodils in Florida](#) book which is based on the life's work of the late John Van Beck. John was a great friend of ours and of historic daffodils.

He tested hundreds of varieties in zone 8b Tallahassee to discover those that did best in what he called the Spanish Moss Belt where modern, mainstream cultivars often fail. Here are ones John recommended to us before he died in 2001, with a few additions from the book itself. Most will thrive throughout the South.

John Van Beck's Very Best for Zone 8b: [Avalanche](#), [Carlton](#), [Dick Wellband](#) (needs shade), [Early Pearl](#), [Erlicheer](#), [Geranium](#), [Grand Primo](#), [N. jonquilla Early Louisiana](#), [Mrs. Backhouse](#) (needs shade), [Tenby](#), [Texas Star](#), [Thalia](#) (needs shade), [Sweetness](#), [Trevithian](#).

Other Excellent Performers: [Butter and Eggs](#) (needs shade), [Campernelle](#), [Double Campernelle](#), [Empress](#), [Orange Phoenix](#), [N. pseudonarcissus](#) (Lent lily), [Queen of the North](#) (despite its name!), [St. Keverne](#), and [Van Sion](#).

Another challenging area for bulbs is the arid Southwest. Our friend Mary Peace Douglas who gardens in Tucson and Sonoita, Arizona, has been growing our bulbs since 1997. She reports great success with [Avalanche](#), [Conspicuous](#), [Double Campernelle](#), [Grand Primo](#), [N. jonquilla Early Louisiana](#), and [White Lady](#). If you're in the Southwest, you might want to give some of these a try as well! (June 2005)

“Stunning” and “Profuse” in Mae’s California Garden

Our long-time customer Mae Hoag of Orinda, California, writes of a new favorite and two old friends that just keep going and going:

“What a beautiful flower ‘[Red Devon](#)’ is! I think it is my favorite of all. The deep orange on the outer edge of the cup softening to yellow closer to the perianth is truly stunning. The [Campernelles](#) and [Early Louisiana jonquils](#) I bought from you many years ago are still blooming profusely, too. Thank you!” (2005 catalog)

More on the Copeland Sisters and Their Daffodils

More of you responded to the [Copeland family history](#) in our last newsletter than to anything else we’ve ever published here. We’re glad you liked it!

Irene’s daughter wrote again this spring to say our bulbs were blooming beautifully for her family. She also told us that the RHS staged an exhibit of the Copeland doubles and their many descendants at the London Daffodil Show. As famed daffodil breeder Brian Duncan explained to us, it’s almost impossible to find a good modern double which does not have ‘Mary Copeland’ in its ancestry. Double daffodils rarely set seed, but one of two seeds found by chance in a single pod of ‘Mary Copeland’ in the 1940s grew into ‘Falaise’ which was fully fertile and opened the floodgates of double daffodil breeding. For a photo of the RHS exhibit and a couple of Brian’s great modern doubles descended from ‘Mary Copeland’, [click here](#). (June 2005)

Who Were Irene and Mary Copeland? A Daughter Tells Their Story

Two of the loveliest old double daffodils are ‘Irene Copeland’ and ‘Mary Copeland’. We knew they were named for the daughters of the man who bred them, but that’s about all we knew — till last spring when we got an email from Irene’s daughter. She was looking for bulbs of both daffodils to plant on Irene and Mary’s graves, but she couldn’t find true stock in England. Even though we don’t normally ship outside the US, for her we made an exception! In appreciation she sent us a short history of her mother and Auntie Mary along with a photo of them as teenagers. To enjoy both, [click here](#). (May 2005)

Tour Spotlights Cherokee Daffodils in Oklahoma

Our good friend Russell Studebaker, garden writer for the *Tulsa World*, led a pilgrimage two weeks ago to explore heirloom daffodils in rural Oklahoma that may date back to the earliest days of Cherokee settlement and the notorious Trail of Tears. For Russell’s inspiring report and a few photos, visit oldhousegardens.com/russellstudebaker.asp. And then consider leading a similar tour of rediscovery in your own neighborhood! (March 2005)

The First Daffodils of Spring are Often . . . Easter Lilies?

Yes, “Easter lilies” is the traditional name many old gardeners give to [Narcissus pseudonarcissus](#), the very old, very early-blooming trumpet daffodil that thrives from Cape Cod to Georgia and points west. Even in areas such as Piedmont, North Carolina where our friend Douglas

Ruhren of the [Daniel Stow Botanical Gardens](#) says they usually bloom by Valentine's Day, the Easter lilies name seems to have been more common than the traditional English name which we use, Lent lilies.

According to our good customer Beate Jensen of [Belmont](#), the estate of artist Gari Melchers in Fredericksburg, VA, the name is even more common in Norway. There all trumpet daffodils are called *paskeliljer*, which means Easter lilies, and all late-blooming pheasant's eye daffodils are called *pinseiljer* or Ascension lilies. (Feb. 2005)

[Daffodils in Florida: A Field Guide to the Costal South](#)

Daffodils in Florida? You betcha! Self-published by our friends Linda and Sara Van Beck, this exciting new book is, as Scott says on the back cover of it, "a friendly, knowing guide" for gardeners in the Deep South, especially zones 8b-9a, who have been "disappointed by daffodil duds while longing for, and wondering about, the hosts of nameless daffodils thriving without care in old gardens and abandoned places." The Van Becks are passionate amateurs whose advice and lists of recommended varieties are based on years of research in Florida gardens. This is no slick coffee-table book but a labor of love for everyone who "loves daffodils and the tough, gorgeous, traditional flowers of the South." (Jan. 2005)

Daffodil Shows Start Soon; OHG Customers Won Big Last Year

Last spring, many of our customers won blue ribbons for "Best Historic Daffodil" at American Daffodil Society shows around the country. Congratulations to Glenda Brogoitti, Laura Anne Brooks, Jennifer Brown, Bonnie Campbell, Fred Fettig, Kirby Fong, Joe Hamm, Clay and Fran Higgins (winners at the National Show), Beth Holbrooke, John Lipscomb, Joy Mackinney, Becky Fox Matthews, Margaret Nichols, Nancy Pilipuf, Sandra Stewart (current ADS Historic Daffodils Committee chair), and Lissa Williamson!

The winningest "Best Historic" daffodils included Beryl (13 ribbons!), [Grand Primo](#) (4), [Rip van Winkle](#) (3), and with two ribbons each: Actaea, Aspasia, [Beersheba](#), [Dreamlight](#), [Folly](#), [Geranium](#), [Mary Copeland](#), Rubra, and [Sweetness](#). Other winners included Chinese White, Elvira, [Grand Monarque](#), Grey Lady, Hawera, Hexameter, [Horsfieldii](#), Ideal, Juliet, Klondyke, Moonshine, [Ornatus](#), [Saint Keverne](#), Silver Chimes, Sparkling Eye, Sweet Pepper, Tain, [Thalia](#), Trousseau, [Van Sion](#), [White Lady](#), White Owl, Yellow Cheerfulness, and Zero.

A whole new season of ADS shows kicks off soon. For the one nearest you, or to learn more about the ADS, go to www.daffodilusa.org/. (Jan. 2005)

Daffodil Rescue of 75,000 Bulbs Led by Eagle Scout

For years on a hillside in rural Pennsylvania, a colorful planting of daffodils in the shape of a big cross and the words "Welcome Spring" bloomed as a beloved local landmark. But recently the old farm was sold and the daffodils were about to be bulldozed. Happily, Eagle Scout Jeremy Corll organized a massive rescue project, moving some 75,000 bulbs down the road a bit to a hillside next to a local church. For the full inspiring story by our friend Doug Oster of the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, or to buy some of the excess bulbs, go to www.post-gazette.com/pg/04228/360755.stm, follow the link to the church's website, and then click on "Eagle Scout Project." (Oct. 2004)

Daffodil Bulb Fly is Coming! Are You Ready?

If you see a "bee" buzzing loudly around your daffodils in late spring, there's a good chance it's a bulb fly, one of the very few pests that trouble daffodils. Our good customer Dona Townsend of Lebanon, Oregon, shares some unusual tips for combating it:

"If you disturb a fly and then stand still, it seems to go back to where it was when you disturbed it. I use a blue fly swatter (they seem to see other colors) and swat them, but you have to find the flies and make sure they are dead. If they are simply stunned they will recover and fly off later. Be careful because if your shadow or the swatter's shadow hits a fly, it immediately flies off."

And though we recommend poisons only as a last resort, Dona adds: "I'm also trying a rose systemic insecticide. I sprinkle it on just as the daffodils are coming through the ground and let the rain soak it into the soil. The roots pick up the systemic, which travels into the bulb. When the small larvae eat their way into the basal plate, they die. I've dug about 100 varieties and found only two that had fly damage."

For more on bulb flies, see ipm.ncsu.edu/AG136/fly4.html. (March 2004)

Mobile's Bill Finch Lauds OHG and Daffodils for Zone 8/9

Bill is the environmental editor for the *Mobile Press-Register*, and after reading one of his articles you'll probably wish he wrote for your local paper. Recently he wrote, "Let me remind you where you're most likely to find the bulbs that grow well in our climate: Old House Gardens." Then he listed the daffodils he has found most reliable in his zone 9 garden. His top three are ['Campernelle'](#), ['Carlton'](#), and ['Grand Monarque'](#), and he also highly recommends ['Trevithian'](#), ['Sweetness'](#), [Lent lily](#) (*N. pseudonarcissus*), ['Avalanche'](#), ['Thalia'](#), and ['Early Louisiana' jonquil](#). (Dec. 2003)

First Blooms of Spring: Our Customers Write

Many thanks to everyone who shared stories of their first spring bloomers! Here are two about daffodils.

Scott Thigpen of Sumter, SC, wrote: "Having grown up in Florida where we really don't have a spring bloom, I get so excited when I see the first daffodils blooming here. They are usually our first change from brown and dead to color and life." The earliest — starting February 1 this year — is "an abundant stand of small yellow daffodils" naturalized from an old homesite. These are [N. pseudonarcissus](#), often known as the Lent lily and cherished since colonial days.

Doug Ruhren of Belmont, NC, has flowers blooming all winter long, but he also wrote of the Lent lily: "I saw the first one yesterday, 2/7/03. It appeared freshly open. The gardens here were started in 1989, but these clearly are from an earlier inhabitant. They are mixed with "Scrambled Eggs" [['Van Sion'](#) or ['Butter and Eggs'](#)] around an ancient Yoshino cherry tree." (March 2003)

Who Is Mrs. Backhouse and Why Is She in My Garden — Twice?

Ever wonder about the people whose names grace our flowers? Sarah Elizabeth Backhouse (1857-1921), was a gifted hybridizer of daffodils and other bulbs. She lived at Sutton Court, near Hereford, England, and with her husband worked for years trying to develop a daffodil with a red trumpet. Their efforts resulted in many award-winning varieties, but their greatest achievement was the luscious, pink-cupped ['Mrs. R.O. Backhouse' daffodil](#) of 1921. It's still so well loved that it's one of our perennial best-sellers. But that's not all! Mrs. B. also bred crocus, snowdrops, colchicums, hyacinths, and lilies, including a lovely, pink-and-amber martagon named ['Mrs. R.O. Backhouse'](#). (Feb. 2003)

Josephine Dekker, Daffodil Rescuer

Josephine Dekker is not your usual Dutch bulb farmer. I visited her this spring in the North Holland farmhouse that her great-grandfather built and where she lives with her 83-year-old mother (who doesn't look a day over 63) and several friendly cats. The house looks huge under its tall pyramidal roof, but the back two-thirds is actually the barn—a traditional arrangement that dates back to the Middle Ages. The front third, with its antique paneling, lace curtains, and sleeping cupboard, seems like a very cozy museum.

Josephine rescues heirloom daffodils. She started by bringing old ones from the gardens of her countryside neighbors into her own front yard. "Because they are so beautiful," she explains, "and they grow so well here." Soon, though, she saw an opportunity, and though her farm lies well outside Holland's bulb districts, she began collecting more and more old daffodils, propagating them in her fields, and taking them to experts to identify. Often she literally rescues the bulbs. ['Seagull'](#), for example, she found lying in masses in someone's driveway where he was drying the foliage so they'd fit more compactly into his garbage cans!

We are proud to be working with Josephine. She's a dirt farmer with the soul of a poet, hard-pressed as small-farmers everywhere are, but sensitive to a different sort of beauty and working hard to build a future from — and for — the past. (2001-02 catalog)

In John Van Beck's Memory, Plant Florida-Loving Daffodils

OHG and historic daffodils lost a great friend this past year with the passing of John Van Beck, founder of the Florida Daffodil Society. John was full of enthusiasm, humor, deep daffodil knowledge, and a maverick spirit. I'll miss him a lot.

John tested hundreds of *Narcissus* in zone-8b Tallahassee to discover the best ones for "the Spanish Moss Belt" where modern, mainstream cultivars often fail. For those we offer, [click here](#). All

will do well throughout most of the South. (2001-02 catalog)

Jane and Henry: “Falling in Love with a Flower”

Jane Hearne of Johnson City, Tennessee, has joined the long list of customers who write us in praise of our true, Southern-heirloom [Campernelle](#) narcissus She writes:

“The Campernelles I ordered from you . . . are exquisite. I am so taken with them — their beauty is so delicate. And to think they have endured for centuries.

“I wanted to share a quote from Henry Mitchell with you: ‘I’ve seen in other gardeners a tendency to gaze at some flower as if glued to the spot and unaware of anything else. At first the gardener has the queasy feeling he’s falling in love with a flower. But as years pass he sees that some common flower has turned magical to him.’

“That’s how I feel about my Campernelles.” (1999-2000 catalog)

Wordsworth’s “Daffodils” and the Pleasures of Memory

Though you can probably quote a line or two from William Wordsworth’s “Daffodils,” when was the last time you read the whole thing? Here’s your chance.

The daffodils that inspired Wordsworth as he vacationed in England’s Lake District were almost certainly [N. pseudonarcissus](#), the Lent lily, which naturalizes happily in much of the US as well. But I think you’ll find the poem is really more about the pleasures of memory than daffodils — and much more than a sappy cliché. (1999-2000 catalog)

“Daffodils,” by William Wordsworth (1770-1850)

I wandered lonely as a cloud
That floats on high o’er vales and hills,
When all at once I saw a crowd,
A host, of golden daffodils;
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.

Continuous as the stars that shine
And twinkle on the milky way,
They stretched in never-ending line
Along the margin of a bay:
Ten thousand saw I at a glance
Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.

The waves beside them danced; but they
Out-did the sparkling waves in glee:
A poet could not but be gay,
In such a jocund company:
I gazed — and gazed — but little thought
What wealth the show to me had brought:

For oft, when on my couch I lie
In vacant or in pensive mood,
They flash upon the inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude;
And then my heart with pleasure fills,
And dances with the daffodils.

Grandma Says: Those Aren’t Daffodils, They’re Jonquils!

Our good customer Nancy Foster of Clemson, South Carolina, writes:

“My grandmother (born 1884) called daffodils such as [‘Avalanche’](#) and ‘Laurens Koster’ ‘narcissus’ (as opposed to ‘paperwhites’) and all the yellow ones ‘jonquils.’ ‘Daffodils,’ on the other hand, were just something in a Wordsworth poem. Thanks for providing me with the ‘real’ narcissus and jonquils so precious to my childhood!” (1998-99 catalog)

'Albus Plenus Odoratus': The "Gardenia-Flowered" Narcissus

Though the *International Daffodil Register* dates this double pheasant's-eye to just 1861, forms indistinguishable from it were figured by Clusius in 1601 and Parkinson in 1629. Very beautiful and very fragrant, it can also be very demanding. The buds "blast" — fail to open— if the weather gets too hot, which easily happens as they bloom in latest spring.

Surprisingly, I've had my best success with them planted near a warm wall. I'm guessing the extra warmth speeds them into bloom before the macro-climate heats up too much for them. 'Albus Plenus Odoratus' is still widely planted in mild, misty England, and we hear rapturous reports of it from New England and the Pacific Northwest. (1995 catalog)

On Daffodils and Ecstasy

Though some may say [Louise Beebe Wilder](#) gets a little carried away here in this excerpt from her 1916 classic, *My Garden*, many of you will know just how she feels. She writes:

"When one comes to Daffodils, it is difficult to write with moderation or even to think connectedly — one wants to go into ecstasies and to run, in spirit, from one sunshiny group to another inhaling the ineffable wet-earth-and-sun perfume which is their birthright. . . .

"It was Mahamet who said more than a thousand years ago, 'He that hath two cakes of bread, let him sell one of them and buy Narcissus, for bread is food for the body but Narcissus is food for the soul.' And verily it is true — food for the soul and delight for the eyes, these gleaming things lying like patches of light among the fallen Cherry Blossoms, glorifying the brown earth, and lifting the most sodden into a rarer atmosphere. Daffodil time is the very height of spring, the epitome of springing youth and hope." (1995 catalog)

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