

EARLY VARIETIES OF DAFFODILS

Beginning the blooming season in late March

John C. Wister

IN growing plants, one should choose varieties that will give as long a succession of bloom as possible. Many gardeners make the mistake of having varieties which bloom all at the same time. This mistake often comes from visiting good collections and making notes of plants that are in bloom on the same day, consequently ignoring varieties which have bloomed earlier and others which will come into bloom later.

Classification

The various daffodil classifications, made in the past, have been concerned only with the form and color of flower. Early classifications were based on two wild types: the trumpet type, native to northern Europe, and the poet type of France and Switzerland. Botanists, who liked to use Latin, formerly called these "magni-coronati" and "parvi-coronati." These terms are no longer in common use. Hybridization between these types has given rise to many varieties intermediate in form, which do not fit into either group; and plant exploration has brought into gardens many intermediate types, which at first were called "large cups" or "small cups."

The large cups were reclassified under the inconvenient term, "incomparabilis"; and the small cups were named "Barri," after Peter Barr, the great English seedsman and daffodil grower. Later the all-white varieties were split off: the small-cup one being called "Leedsii" (in honor of Edward Leeds, an English daffodil breeder of a century ago); and the larger ones designated as "Giant Leedsii." This left out entirely the hybrids of small

species such as *Narcissus Jonquilla* and *Narcissus cyclamineus*; also double varieties, and the artificial hybrids between the poet group and the tender bunch-flowered species.

The Royal Horticultural Society published various classifications, each of which became outdated. The 1923 classification, which still stands, but may be changed in 1949 or 1950, is given on the preceding two pages.

None of these classifications has taken into consideration the blooming season. It is my purpose in these articles to suggest (1) some extra-early varieties, which will bloom in late March and up to the middle of April (in the Philadelphia and New York areas); and (2) some extra-late varieties which will not come into bloom (in those areas) before the first week in May and will last to May 15 or 20 or even later. The addition of these two groups assures a season of some six weeks to two months, and overcomes the usual complaint that daffodils bloom only a short time; this complaint applies only to the mid-season varieties which (in this area) come mostly between April 15 and May 1.

Early Varieties

The very earliest to bloom are some small and rather delicate species and wild types that are suitable only for rock gardens. Among these are *Narcissus minimus*, *minor*, *cyclamineus*, and *lobularis*. I have had these in bloom before the middle of March.

Reliable early varieties for the garden can be in bloom (in this area) about March 25; the earliness depends upon where they are planted. On a south slope protected by buildings, the flowers come a week or two earlier than in exposed situations. For earliest blossoms choose February Gold or March Sunshine,



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February Gold, a *Narcissus cyclamineus* hybrid

both *Narcissus cyclamineus* hybrids and much alike. March Sunshine is more graceful, and opens two or three days later.

Much better known was the large-cup variety, Sir Watkin. It was naturalized by the thousands in many fields and

woodlands. It was strong-growing, free-blooming, and thoroughly reliable. It did not, however, have the quality of some of the newer kinds such as Fortune, Jalna, Carlton, or Whitely Gem. These should be added by those who wish to have a few bulbs of some newer kind.

There are several early trumpets which follow very shortly after the large-cup varieties mentioned. Silvanite and Jefta are pale bicolor varieties.

Among the real yellows, The First is supposed to be the earliest; but it is no earlier than Aerolite. Both are inexpensive. More expensive varieties are Erna Rubinstein, Statendam, Duchanel, and Elgin.

There are only two white trumpets that come as early as the varieties men-

tioned. One of them, Snowflake, dates back to 1890; it has apparently been discarded by all commercial growers and has become a "forgotten" daffodil. I have kept it because it comes early and because it has few competitors. Alice Knights is much better known. Neither of these varieties is particularly strong-growing.

There are many large-cupped white varieties with cups so large that it is often difficult to tell whether they should be classified as trumpets or as Giant

Trumpet Daffodil Aerolite

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Leedsii. They grow well and are extremely beautiful. The oldest, Mermaid, dates back forty years, and like Snowflake has been dropped by the commercial growers. I have had it for many years, and it has bloomed consistently and grown well. More modern varieties, no longer high in price, are Silver Star, Daisy Schaeffer, and White Nile; more expensive are Moray, Niphetos, Naxos, Brunswick, and Truth. While these may be a good deal alike, I believe that all of them are worth keeping: they come between April 1 and 15 (in this area); and we need white varieties in the early season.

Most of the varieties offered in dealers' catalogs reach their height (in this area) between April 20 and 25. During that week the flowers are the most spectacular. In this mid-season group the greatest advances have been made in color range and color combination. Also in this group the flowers of finest quality and best texture and substance are to be found. There are many to choose from; but nearly all the ones now offered for sale by specialists and by the best dealers are good varieties worthy of a place. A possible criticism is that there are too many which are too much alike; it is difficult to know which to select.

MID-SEASON DAFFODILS

*New light on a few of the many
that are available*

Charles H. Mueller

IN considering the almost unlimited array of mid-season Daffodils, the phrase "embarrassment of riches" comes to mind; yet I do not find it in the least embarrassing to contemplate the wealth of beautiful bloom which these lovely flowers bestow, at their height, in manifold variations of form, size, and color.

By mid-season varieties I refer to those that bloom in the New York-Philadelphia area sometime during the period from April 15 through the first week of May, depending on the season. There are now available to gardeners literally hundreds of fine new and old varieties that flower during this period. Naturally, any discussion which does not run on endlessly must be limited to part of them and must omit many good ones. The task of selection is further complicated by the

fact that each year scores of new varieties are introduced, many of which deserve a permanent place in any good collection.

Many a person is unfamiliar with the amazing range of variation in the form and color of Daffodils, and thinks of these flowers vaguely as pretty, yellow or white-and-yellow flowers that bloom in the spring. Such a person often wonders that there can be so many kinds listed in even a small catalog without duplication. But as he wakes up to the many-faceted beauty of the Narcissus, he realizes that there are more possible combinations of form, size, and color in this flower than there are hands at bridge. Of two kinds whose perianths and crowns are both golden yellow, one may have a wider crown than the other, with perhaps a more heavily frilled brim; or the perianth of one may be flat and overlapping, while that of the other is flaring and pointed. Here may be two varieties, each with white petals and red-edged cup; but notice carefully whether the red margin

is deeper and broader in one than the other, and whether the cup is fluted in the first and straight in the second.

Such subtle variations are in addition to the differences officially recognized in the presently accepted Royal Horticultural Society classification of Narcissus. Yet I find it very helpful to think of my Daffodils as belonging to certain color groupings beyond the official categories and their subdivisions—especially when considering those included in the first four divisions, to which most mid-season varieties belong: the Trumpet, Incomparabilis, Barri, and Leedsii.

Trumpets

For example, I think of the all-yellow Trumpet Daffodils as falling into at least two groups: the golden yellow kinds, like

Trumpet Daffodil King Alfred

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King Alfred; and the lighter, primrose-yellow varieties, like old Emperor. King Alfred, for all its universality, is still a magnificent flower when well grown from healthy bulbs, and I should never omit it from my collection. Its size is imposing, and its large, flanged and heavily frilled trumpet is beautifully proportioned in relation to its broad perianth. Its color, however, has a brassy tone, which seems to be more emphasized when it is planted with Primroses or primrose-colored Daffodils. Face it down with a large fore-planting of deep blue Grape-hyacinths (*Muscari armeniacum*), and it shows a striking note of gold. Opening early, it has a long season of bloom; but, like all golden yellow Trumpets, King Alfred refuses to naturalize. It needs a sunny spot in good, well-drained garden soil; and even then it does not repeat too well.

Among the newer golden Trumpets, Diotima is the most spectacular. This majestic flower has long, starry perianth parts of a size to match its huge long trumpet. It is uniform deep yellow, with just a touch of chartreuse. Golden Harvest, which is rapidly becoming very popular and plentiful, is undeniably impressive because of its fine size and substance; but it is not so well proportioned as King Alfred. Lord Wellington is a well-formed Trumpet of outstanding size, but I have not found it a very reliable grower.

Perhaps the best-proportioned golden Trumpet is Burgomeester Gouverneur. While not so large as Diotima, it has perfect form and substance and appears to be a strong grower. Its color is deep, but it has absolutely no tone of brass. This year I grew for the first time a variety called Senior. This large Daffodil I thought remarkable because it was not merely golden yellow, but its huge, heavily frilled trumpet had a tone of orange.

Among the lighter yellow Trumpets, Emperor was justly the favorite for many years; but it has ceased to be a good commercial grower, and is becoming less

easily available. Adequate to take its place and superior in its own right is Aerolite, a primrose-yellow flower with a little deeper trumpet. Aerolite has fine size and substance and perfect show proportions. More than that, it is a robust grower and a splendid naturalizer.

The all-white Trumpets I divide into two groups: those whose trumpets turn snow-white, and those whose trumpets remain cream or ivory. Of the first group, Beersheba and Mount Hood should both be planted. Beersheba has a long, fluted trumpet, and nods slightly. The trumpet of Mount Hood is broader at the mouth, stands out perpendicular to its strong, straight stem, and is framed by a broad, overlapping perianth. Roxane is large and has a clear white color; but its broad, irregular trumpet is coarse by comparison with Beersheba and Mount Hood.

Imperator is the largest Daffodil with ivory trumpet, and in fact, is one of the largest and most beautiful in the all-white category. Mrs. Krelage, which not many years ago was the best white purchasable at less than a king's ransom, has been surpassed many times by newer kinds; but it is still worth growing. It has an attractive tubular trumpet with rolled brim.

Clearly outstanding among the bicolor trumpets is the new variety Patria. Its perianth is snow-white, broadly overlapping, and perfectly formal. It has a long trumpet, frilled at the brim, of warm yellow. Patria has an extremely long season of bloom; it lasted three weeks this season in my garden. President Lebrun is another striking bicolor. Its shining white perianth frames a large trumpet, heavily frilled and expanded at the mouth, of deep yellow, almost buff in soft lights.

Incomparabilis

The Incomparabilis section is officially divided into those with yellow and those with white perianths. Of the scores of truly remarkable hybrids in this division,

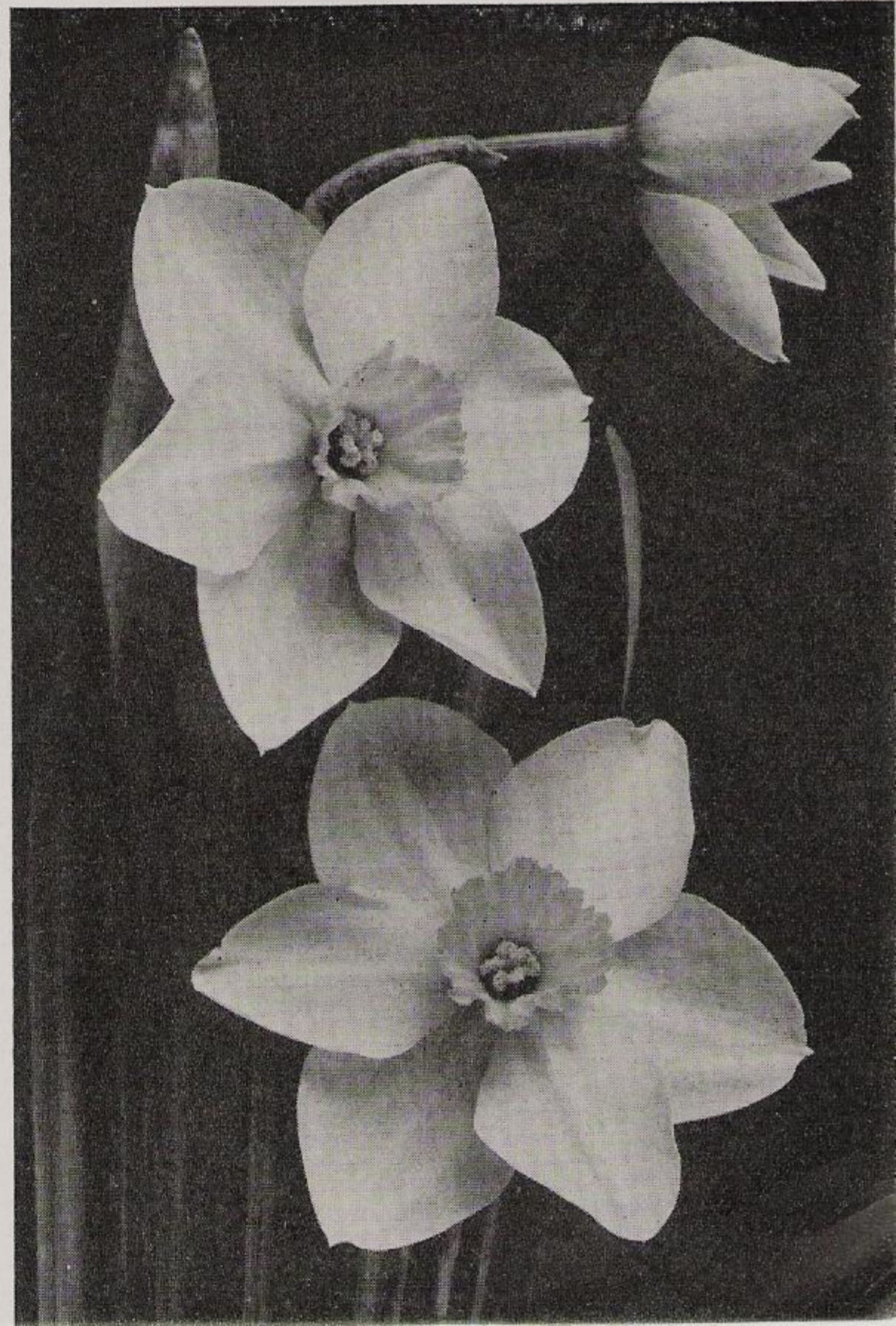
some have all-yellow crowns like old Sir Watkin, but most of the new ones have red or orange-red in their crowns.

Carlton is still one of the best of those whose perianth and crown are both yellow. Its broad petals are clear primrose, and its wide crown of deep yellow is heavily frilled. It opens early, but outlasts many later varieties which come and go during its long blooming period. Havelock is a fine, tall, clear yellow; and Monte Carlo is worth having for its unusually deep color. The new Daladier has an interesting feature in that its cup, which opens warm primrose, actually deepens to orange-yellow as the flower ages.

When speaking of the outstanding red-cupped Incomparabilis kinds, it is difficult to stop, as each year brings ever

Yellow Poppy, an Incomparabilis Daffodil

McFarland photo



finer ones. This year we were impressed by Bond Street. Its huge broad crown is heavily crinkled and frilled at the edge, with a wide margin of rosy orange, and is framed by a sulfur-primrose perianth 4 inches wide. Aranjuez is another fine new *Incomparabilis*, with pale yellow perianth framing a wide, red-edged crown.

Carbineer, El Dorado, Ramillies, Red Marley, and Orange Flag are other excellent *Incomparabilis* Daffodils with

more or less red in their crowns. A unique variety is Dillenberg, which has flaring petals of deep yellow and a vivid orange-red crown. The foliage spears rise above the flower; this would ordinarily be a serious defect, yet so bright is this flower that the sight of it among the tips of its gray-green leaves is exceedingly fascinating. One of my old favorites is Yellow Poppy, whose refined cup is delicately margined apricot. I have always fancied this soft primrose

Tunis, a Daffodil of the *Leedsii* division

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Daffodil next to the pink Mrs. R. O. Backhouse.

In the division of *Incomparabilis* Daffodils with white perianths, the number of beautiful varieties is likewise legion. Here, too, the hybridizers have favored red cups, although there are a few good ones with clear yellow crowns. Among these *Polindra* is especially lovely; its clean white perianth measures 4 inches across, and it has a broad, prettily fluted cup of clear lemon yellow.

For many years there was no variety closely similar to John Evelyn. This variety has a broad white perianth and a uniquely heavily crested crown of lemon yellow. Now a number of seedlings have appeared, which are distinct improvements and extraordinarily beautiful. The Duke of Windsor is perhaps the most famous, having triumphed at many shows in the past two years. This Daffodil has a broad crested crown whose edge deepens to orange, then turns light yellow as it matures. In a clump this gives the appearance of flowers with varying degrees of orange in their crowns. Mary Blonck has a white perianth, but otherwise shows little resemblance to its parent. The crown is vividly margined red, and the perianth recurves in the manner of *Franciscus Drake*. *Smaragd* most resembles its parent in coloring, and is, we think, the finest John Evelyn seedling. Three of this group with yellow perianths are *Leviathon*, *Majarda*, and *Rene de Chalons*.

After trying new ones each year, for a fine white *Incomparabilis* with red crown I still fall back on *Dick Wellband*. True, its large flat crown is a bit irregular, but it has a deep satisfying redness and resists the sun. *Scarlet Leader* undoubtedly has a more perfect form, and is a superior show Daffodil; but it burns more readily. *Fancheon*, *Firebird*, and *Fran-chot Tone* are splendid new kinds with yellow cups brightly margined red, while *Semper Avanti* simply exudes fine substance.



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Thalia, a *Triandrus* variety

Barri

The Barri varieties, whether with white or yellow perianths, all have red-edged cups. Among those with yellow petals, the new *Reginald Dixon* is remarkable for its size and for its large, flat crown broadly margined rosy orange. *Edward Buxton* has a deep yellow perianth and a neat cup, crisply edged red, which endures the hot sun. *Mangosteen* and *Spring Beauty* are bright Daffodils with vivid orange cups backed by warm yellow petals. *Afterglow* should never be missed by those who appreciate perfection of form and delicacy of coloring.

The white Barri include attractive varieties with small, but intensely vivid red cups; but most of them come so late as to miss the mid-season category. *Fire-tail*, *Hades*, *St. Louis*, and *Vergers* flower as the season goes into its late stage; but all of these should be in a good collection. A new variety of striking beauty, which blossoms earlier than the foregoing, is *Kansas*. It is a tall, well-formed flower, 3½ inches across. Its flat, white perianth frames a most appealing

cup of apple-green margined orange-apricot.

Leedsii

The Giant Leedsii division contains varieties with white perianths and medium-large crowns which are also white or creamy white. It happens to contain, also, some of the loveliest varieties of the Narcissus genus. What would a Daffodil garden be without Gertie Millar or Tunis? Gertie Millar has a broad crown of ivory with just a hint of flesh tone. Tunis, with its pale copper brim, is still unique in that there is no other variety of similar coloring. Grayling and E. H. Wilson (Betsy Penn) are other fine Giant Leedsii, as are the earlier Daisy Schaeffer, Silver Star, and White Nile.

A new group of Daffodils of increasing fame has also been classified in the Giant Leedsii division—the new “pink” Daffodils. For many years Mrs. R. O. Backhouse has held sway as the most famous “pink” Daffodil. Now it must make way for a new and remarkable group of its seedlings which are just coming on. It must be emphasized that the pink in all of them is confined to the

crown—they all have white perianths. And the new grower of them should not expect a flaming rose. Mrs. Backhouse and its seedlings all open with crowns of buff, which gradually turn apricot, then pink in varying degrees of intensity. Siam is the earliest of the new seedlings, and has the widest crown. It is followed by Pink Select, which has a markedly crinkled brim. Lady Bird has the longest crown—practically a trumpet—and the inside is a very satisfactory rose-pink. Pink Delight has a deep pink brim; and Louise de Coligny is notable for its fragrance.

Triandrus and Cyclamineus

The *triandrus* species has given us some splendid and garden-worthy varieties. Justly popular is Thalia, with its three to four starry flowers of pure white. Thalia is tall, and naturalizes well. Elizabeth Prentice is a chaste Triandrus, with generally but one blossom per stem, and is not too tall for the rock garden. Shot Silk is remarkable for the large size of its flowers, as is Silver Chimes. This latter variety has flat, creamy white flowers, and very broad strap-like foliage of an unusually dark green.

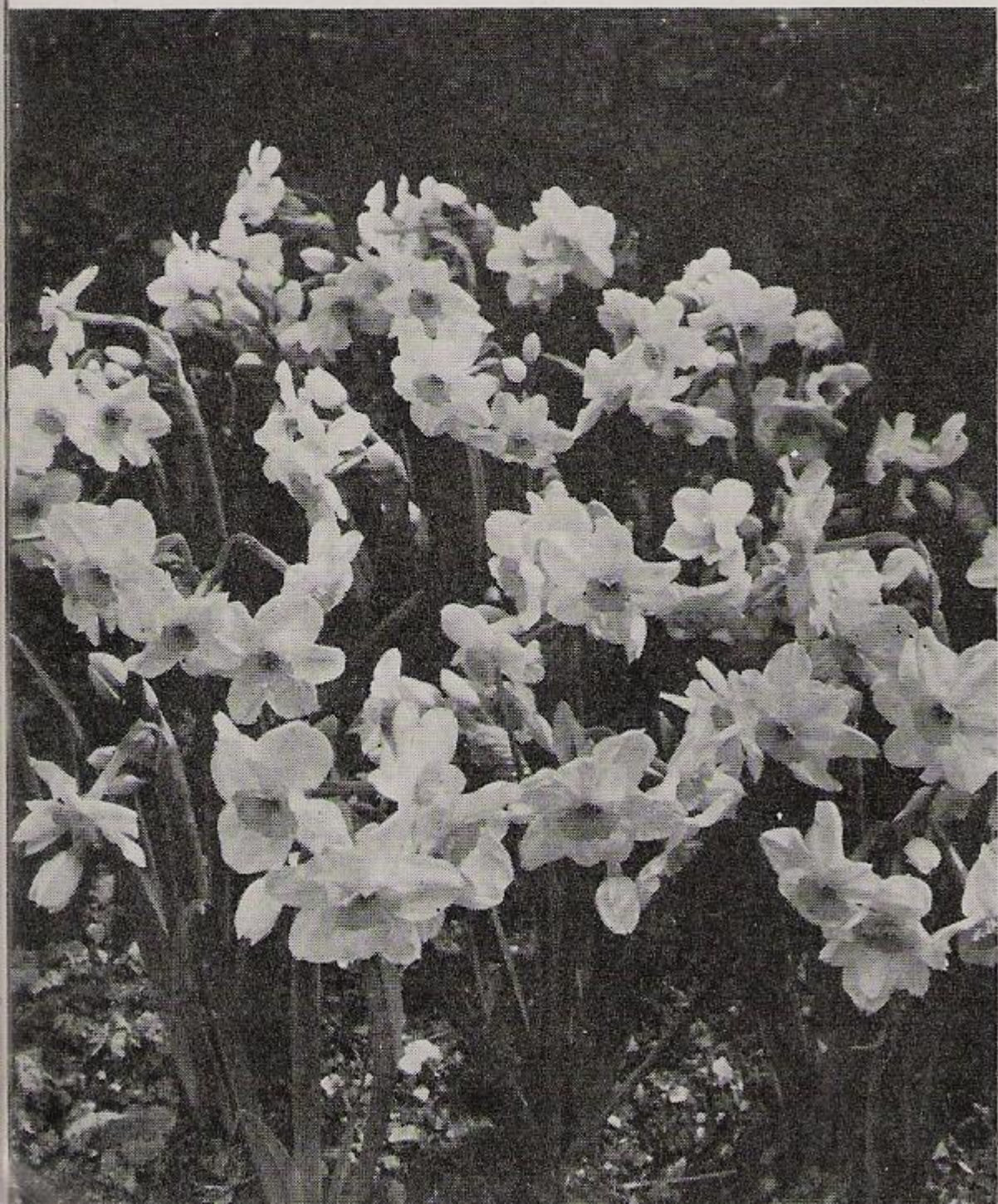
The Cyclamineus division is confined chiefly to very early-flowering sorts, but the Jonquil category contains a number which bloom at the height of the season. With one exception (White Wedgewood) they are all yellow and cluster-flowering. Trevithian produces greenish yellow clusters in abundance. Golden Perfection generally has but two enormous flowers on very tall, straight stems. Golden Sceptre has a very deep color, and often has one late flower opening four weeks after the first shows color.

Poetaz and Poeticus

Most of the Poetaz Daffodils come too late for mid-season; but Glorious opens earlier, with two or three large flowers, having red-rimmed eyes backed by white petals. Red Guard also has few and large flowers, which are deep primrose with

Poetaz Daffodil La Fiancee

McFarland photo



vivid scarlet cups. Halvose has five to seven small flowers, with sulfur petals and small orange cups; while La Fiancee has numerous flowers, white with orange-red cups.

The Poeticus Daffodils are known for the lateness of their flowering season. However, the newer Mrs. H. I. Pratt opened this year in time to catch the last of the mid-season varieties. It has remarkable broad white petals and a vivid red-rimmed eye.

Doubles

In recent years a good deal of attention has been won by the new double Daffodils. For enormous size the full yellow double Valencia has no equal. Insulinde has deep orange petals interspersed with yellow, and is a more attractive flower than the ubiquitous Twink of similar coloring. The most attractive doubles are white or nearly so. Mary Copeland has orange petals interspersed with white; Irene Copeland is white with pale yellow petals. A beautiful new double is the snow-white Mrs. William Copeland. If you use only one double Daffodil to round out your collection, let it be this one.



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Mary Copeland, a Double Daffodil

LATE VARIETIES OF DAFFODILS

Extending the blooming season to late May

John C. Wister

Because the mid-season varieties often go by quickly in a warm spell, I am particularly fond of the late varieties that give fine bloom between May 1 and May 10. The first to be considered is the true *Narcissus Jonquilla* (often sold as *Jonquilla simplex*). It is difficult to get this true to name; and some dealers supply Campernelle or some similar form which comes in mid-season. The true

jonquil opens some flowers in mid-season, but its greatest display is after the first of May. It is the most fragrant of all daffodils, and one of the most charming. It does not grow very strongly, and tends to run out unless it is lifted every few years and planted in new ground that has been well fertilized. A little-known and much later variety of the jonquil group is *Narcissus gracilis*. I have seen it begin blooming as late as May 12 and last till May 20 in spite of hot weather. A north slope, with shade to the south and west, is desirable for the latest flowers on the late-blooming varieties.



McFarland photo

A Jonquil hybrid

In the yellow Barri group, numerous late varieties are offered by specialists. Rarity is one of these. Two unusually tall varieties are Red Sea and Mountain Pride. Newer kinds are Cordova, Stamboul, and Magic Circle.

Among the white Barris, Mrs. Chester J. Hunt was long the best known. It was a splendid flower, but may no longer be available. Other members of this group, which are offered only by specialists in small quantities, are Danger, Sunstar, Vera, Cinderella, Isola, and Picador. They are a good deal alike; and no one would need all of them, except for a very large collection.

The great Irish daffodil breeder, Mr. Guy L. Wilson, has been introducing very late flat-cupped Leedsii varieties. I do not know how many can be had in this country. The oldest are Mystic and Silver Salver. The tallest, Saint Anthony, has apparently been discarded in Europe; but with me it has been exceptionally fine. Newer kinds are Columbine, Dream Light, Gray Lady, Moonbeam, New Moon, and Polar Sea. All are charming flowers; and while they are much alike, each one seems to have a distinction of its own.

The poets, as a group are late. Varieties of them can be selected for extreme lateness; the wild *Narcissus poeticus* var. *recurvus* often continues as late as May 15, but its flowers can not compare in quality with the newer ones which are not quite so late. Dactyl, Dulcimer, and Sonata are splendid. New Irish varieties for testing include Lamplighter, Side-light, and Lights Out.

The old *Narcissus biflorus* has a certain charm, and is a good flower for naturalizing. *Narcissus poeticus plenus*, the old fragrant, double white, is better known under the names "gardenia-flowered narcissus" and "*Narcissus albus plenus odoratus*." In most gardens it is shy-blooming. Much more reliable for blooming, but with less charming flowers are Daphne and Snow Sprite.

Few persons have space for all of the varieties mentioned, or would care to own them all. But even on the smallest place, the gardener who would really enjoy the spring should have a few of the earliest and a few of the late-season daffodils.

Other articles on Daffodils may be found in PLANTS & GARDENS, Autumn, 1947.

