

# *Historics Handbook*

*A Short Field Guide to  
The Most Common  
Old Daffodils  
in the  
Deep and Coastal Southeast*



**A joint project of the  
Georgia Daffodil Society,  
Florida Daffodil Society  
and the  
Historics Community  
of the  
American Daffodil Society**

Dedicated to Capt. John W. Lipscomb, Jr.

Cover: *N. pseudonarcissus*, rescued from road widening projects, northeast Georgia



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## *Introduction*

### *Notes to the Gentle Reader*

The flowers addressed here are those most widely found in old garden contexts in the deep and coastal Southeast. A few of the less common to rare daffodils are included for examples of other flowers one might encounter along the way.

This is not designed to cover the range of historic hybrids found in Natchez MS, where old daffodils love the rich soils and light shade, with just enough cold hours to make a real go of it. Nor into Tennessee, North Carolina or Virginia, again with colder weather and richer soils. Further, these same areas provide good conditions for daffodils to naturally cross-pollinate creating completely new flowers, many quite lovely in their own right – but impossible to “identify.” Yet it is difficult to ignore these areas and their flowers, so more are included here than might be warranted, because it’s so hard to say “no” to those flowers and their gardeners.

Also, this isn’t designed to address all the flowers that lurk in cut flower fields from the 1920s and 1930s (although some examples are provided). If located in a woodland spot, these daffy patches can preserve a wide array of flowers. However, having lived in one spot for decades, they are not at their true glory as compared to when they were originally planted, so identification is a laborious, multi-year project.

One must take care to remember that just as old houses have been lived in for a very long time, so too old gardens have been “lived in.” Just because the house is old doesn’t mean the garden and all its flowers are from the same date. Gardeners always love to go out and play, so many an “old” garden has “newer” flowers – both daffodils and other plants.

Lastly this isn’t meant to be a full daffodil book, just a down and dirty “get started” guide. There’s plenty of free information on the Internet courtesy of the American Daffodil Society or “ADS” (<http://daffodilusa.org>), and there are a number of daffodil books for sale as well. If you don’t have one or two in your library yet, you need to get one if you’re serious about treating your daffodils well.

## *How to Spot a Historic Daffodil*

Historic daffodils are near and dear to many a Southern gardener's heart. They are what grandmother, great aunt, or mother grew. Many don't know their flowers' "real" names, but instead they know their local, common names. These flowers were passed around between friends and family, and are the daffodils tough enough to withstand unamended dirt and long, hot summers.

"Historic," not "heirloom," is the official term used by the American Daffodil Society for hybridized daffodils introduced prior to 1940. Technically it does not include species flowers. "Heirloom" is a cultural term, denoting plants were passed around by one's elders. Breaking with convention, all "heirloom" daffodils here are called "historic," to give them a sense of history they deserve.

It is easy to be cavalier about historic daffodils, because they hang on for so long in total neglect. They are tough old birds, and don't fool around – if a season is too unpredictable, they'll cut their losses, store their energy and quit trying to bloom. This conservative approach to life is what allows them to survive for decades, long after their original garden caretaker is dead and gone. It's hard to realize that something so fleeting can be so much older than you.

Spotting a dwindled daffodil, down to two leaves (but don't get fooled by a wild onion! they smell), can be an art form – but one you can learn. And down to two leaves also means up to blooming in five or so years. Just when you've completely forgotten, something glorious one day greets you in your garden.



## *Characteristics of Historic Daffodils*

By and large, daffodil hybridizing began in the latter half of the nineteenth century, and in America daffodils didn't become a truly fashionable garden plant until the 1890s.

- ❖ The petals are narrower and more pointed, giving a star-shape form to the flower.
- ❖ Often the petals twist or curl at the edges, so the petals do not overlap much if at all.
- ❖ The petals often seem thin or translucent, and many are ridged or lined.
- ❖ With trumpets, the petals may cup or surround the trumpet, instead of fanning outward, perpendicular to the trumpet.
- ❖ With yellow trumpets, the green of the stem often bleeds up towards the backs of the petals, and the petals are often a paler yellow than the trumpet (giving a two-tone effect).
- ❖ Cups are often very ridged and unsymmetrical (out of round), and rims crinkled or serrated.
- ❖ The cup color is often more staining or bleeding from the rim into the cup, not a solid, saturated color.
- ❖ The foliage can be skinnier, closer to the species' parents' form, while modern daffodils often have wide foliage (particularly apparent on standards, but even jonquils can have noticeably wider leaves).
- ❖ The bulbs are often smaller, again closer to the originating species' size (except for tazettas which are always huge).

In general, a star-shaped flower or dog-eared trumpet reflects an earlier hybridization date. Or, the greater the petal overlap and the greater the petal substance (thickness), the more recent the flower.

You can look up many old flowers on the Internet, using the American Daffodil Society's database DaffSeek (<http://daffseek.org>). First look up the divisions (they come with descriptions on the pull-down menu), then guess at the petal and corona colors. If you're not sure if you have one-third orange, or red, or half, but you know you've got yellow, then just start with a simple "yellow" or "Y." The hard part is guessing a date range, so research the garden's owners. Knowing who could have planted, and when, helps narrow the dates. Once you set your parameters, hit enter. You'll get back rows of flower names with basic information. Start by looking for entries with lots of photos. Most daffodils in old gardens were common at some point, and those are the ones with the most photographs now (the weaker constitution flowers have either been lost or are hiding in limited quantities in special collections).

If someone by luck gives you a name, do double check via DaffSeek. Often cultivars suffered the fate of substitution, so what someone bought isn't really what they got. If stocks were low, or mishaps occurred during digging/packing/shipping, then the name's been misapplied.

## *Saving and Moving Daffodils*

When digging daffodils, always make sure the shovel blade or fork tines are going straight down into the ground and not in on an angle – you do not want to hit (damage) the bulbs if at all possible! The handle on a regular shovel should be out over the daffodil foliage. Dig as much dirt around the roots as is manageable. Unlike other plants, daffodils will not grow new roots to compensate for damaged ones. Never handle dug daffodil clumps by the leaves if possible. You can rip out the leaves, which stunts the bulb, and you leave an open wound that can be attacked by fungus or bacteria.

There are two general ways to move or rescue daffodils while they are growing or in flower.

The best way is to dig as a clump and replant as a clump. If the old daffodils in clumps are terribly over-crowded, and you plo p the clump in its new home, it is very hard to separate the bulbs to give them the space the desperately need. Trying to pull bulbs apart in a clump and replanting can lead to root damage, and it is hard to plant at the proper depth and spacing because of all the roots. If you need to separate the bulbs, put it in a bucket of water and slowly, gently pull the bulbs apart as you swirl the dirt away. Keep the roots damp, out of the sunlight and replant them immediately.

If you cannot replant your dug daffodils immediately, leave them with their dirt in plastic bags. Moisten the dirt well and pull the bag close to keep the moisture in so the roots don't dry out, and put in a deeply shaded place. Replant as soon as you can.

The second way, which is *not* recommended, is to dig the clumps and plant them in a temporary holding bed, or plant in pots. Then, as the foliage goes down naturally, you can dry off the bulbs, store them and plant them out in the fall with proper spacing. However, many of the older hybrid white daffodils and poets do **NOT** like being stored over the summer. Do not leave bulbs in pots over the summer if possible, as they can attract insects that will happily eat your bulbs.

Keep the transplants well watered until the foliage turns yellow. The shocked bulbs with damaged roots will need water even more, but have a harder time absorbing it. When the foliage starts to turn yellow, stop watering.

All historic s will punish you for moving them, some for one year, others for two, as they sit and pout rather than bloom. Over time, if you chose their new home wisely, they will settle in and bloom again.

## *Rules for Rescuing*

Just because the house is old doesn't mean that the bulbs are old. A second or third owner (or child or grandchild) could have come along and planted them in 1955.

If you are not racing the bulldozer on a tract to be scraped clear or spraying of a field for conversion to pasture, take only a few bulbs. Greed is one of the seven deadly sins for a reason. Put a few back into the same hole from any clump that you lift in case the pattern of planting has some significance not yet determined. The daffodils are likely only part of the original landscape design. Make a sketch map of the planting plan if you can. And always backfill your holes as a safety measure.

If you're in a locale where daffodils cross-pollinate naturally, look for evidence of seedlings and variation within the seedling patch. Take notes. And if you end up with something really different and amazing, you can get it registered with the American Daffodil Society (it's happened before!).

Make sure you really do have full permission before walking on property that isn't yours. Just because someone says it is probably okay doesn't mean they own the land, much less have family authority to grant you permission.

When sleuthing a flower's identity, take plenty of photos (see below) to send to folks on the internet for help and take notes. Note its relative flowering time by noting which common varieties nearby were also open at the same time. If you don't have a working knowledge of daffodil seasonality yet, this will give the person you ask for help a point of reference. Note fragrance – it can help guide you, especially if you're dealing with tazettas and jonquils. Also try taking a picture of the unknown with a known historic for comparison purposes. Many cell phones now have good cameras if you don't own a digital camera. If a plant is not blooming, examining foliage can help point you to a tazetta, a jonquil, a large trumpet or diminutive poet-type. Look for color (blue-green, forest green), width (wide, average, skinny), twist (yes/no) and height (average, short, long). If nothing else, this can help you keep your varieties sorted when you get back home to plant.

### **Taking photos for identification**

Take shots of newly opened flowers and of aging flowers, watching for fade patterns and petal changes. Take one profile shot, one straight on shot and one shot from above the flower but not quite straight on but off to the side. This gives a sense of the proportions of the corona (cup) to the petals, how the petals lay, the rim edge, any flaring, etc. Some daffodils can change quite a bit as they age; a number of varieties here look the same when mature but different when first open – and hence how you can start to differentiate them.

Frame the flower so that it takes up most of the field of view. Clump shots are good for foliage but not much else. Photographing white flowers is a challenge, as they reflect light so overexpose quickly. Take the shots on overcast days or in the morning before the light is strong. If you're in heavy shade or in the evening and your flash automatically goes off, use a piece of tissue or set your hand in front of the flash a bit to diffuse or deflect the bright light. Light from the flash will skew the color of the flower, making identification more difficult. Always check your images before you leave the flower to make sure you got a good image; autofocus cameras regularly prefer the background weeds to the flower.



## *Southern Daffodils*

Traditional Southern daffodils are truly heirloom plants. The toughest grow from the Gulf Coast north to Tennessee and Virginia. They often go by simple names like “farm daffodils,” “Easter flowers” or “jonquils,” if not just “dandelions.” In middle Tennessee, one fanciful name for jonquils is “champagne bubbles” or “champagne bottles.”

Below are photographs and descriptions of some of the most common old Southern heirloom daffodils, to help gardeners identify them. They are grouped by flower shape and color to help with identification. Pay attention to blooming times: some flowers look quite similar but bloom at different times (so if it’s the end of March it cannot be an Early season flower in Georgia). If you live in the land of Paperwhites, you should consult *Daffodils in Florida: A Field Guide to the Coastal South* for descriptions of many old strains still found in gardens.

From around 1900 to 1920, the number of daffodils a gardener could buy expanded greatly, and yellow trumpets in particular. Many were robust, and survive in town gardens, but are difficult to identify without the certainty of a known-true-to-name flower to compare against. Worse, good photographs of these old flowers are very hard to come by. These old trumpets include ‘Van Waveren’s Giant’, ‘Olympia’, ‘Robert Sydenham’, ‘Glory of Leiden’, ‘Henry Irving’ and ‘Ard Righ’ among others.

Accurately identifying historic daffodils can be difficult, particularly if the bulbs have been living a life of neglect. With insufficient nutrition, the flower becomes smaller, the petals become “thinner” in “substance” (or, from opaque to more translucent and more like tissue paper) and the petals become narrower or more propeller-shaped. So, if you cannot identify a flower at first, give it some TLC (5-10-15 or 5-15-25 fertilizer in the late fall) and see if the form improves over a few years. It took years for the flower to dwindle, so it will take years for the bulb to rebound and produce better quality flowers. Division 3 (“Small Cup”) flowers in particular seem very sensitive to soil nutrient levels, and prefer a richer soil.

The weather also can be an issue. Prolonged periods of severe cold in December can bring out latent orange/red in rim rings that otherwise don’t appear. Spring cold snaps and long cloudy periods slow down those flowers with fading petals, so they stay the pale yellow (primrose or sulphur yellow) longer, and can also prolong orange/red rim coloration.

But the good news is that overall, in USDA Zone 7b and farther south, there really are not many historic cultivars to choose from; not that many were sold in early catalogs, and not many are strong enough to hold on for 100+ years. These are the most commonly encountered Early and Midseason bloomers, as Late season flowers generally do not survive long in situations of total neglect (unless in a lightly shaded, rich soil location).

Farther north, the bad news is that there are lot more flowers that survive that you’ll have to sort through, and determining its original name from the catalog is a long and arduous process. The good news is you have lots of pretty things to look at for a long time. And remember, brain teasers and puzzles are good for keeping Alzheimer’s at bay. At least that’s what I keep telling myself, anyway.

## Flower Key

The season of bloom given here is with a grain of salt. It seems that established heirloom daffodils will move up their blooming season in order to contend with the early hot summers. Those that are more forgiving on the amount of cold hours required and hotter summer soil temperatures are found more commonly than those that are not so adaptable. Woodland soils and light shade help many early hybrids, particularly those with white petals, thrive where otherwise they would be quickly lost to hot summer clay soils. Yellows require more full sun and so dwindle away under tree canopies.

Measurements are general ballpark numbers only for rough comparatives. Flower size will vary greatly from location to location, and from year to year (drought years make small flowers, etc.).

Many of images used here are of flowers found in historic garden contexts in Georgia and across the South; most tazettas shots are from the Van Beck Test Garden in Tallahassee. If I can remember where they came from, they are so labeled. Others are of flowers grown in intown Atlanta from bulbs known to be “true to name,” so then the resulting flowers are what happens over time to good flowers gone unhappy. Images of named flowers may also be found on “DaffSeek” <http://daffseek.org>.

A helpful tool is a PowerPoint presentation available on the ADS Store web site <http://stores.daffodilusastore.org/publications/>, entitled “Exhibiting and Judging Historic Daffodils” (\$10). It’s full of helpful hints on how to identify many historic daffodils.

The code after the flower name is that of the daffodil world – the number refers to the division (see below), the first letter(s) to the petals color(s), and the second set of letters to the color(s) of the corona (base to rim). Y=yellow, O=orange, W=white, G=green. Not all divisions’ flowers are found in old gardens, so those are absent here.

Dates given are per the Royal Horticultural Society for when a daffodil was first noted in the literature or introduced by the hybridizer. These are not dates of American introduction based on American commercial catalogs.

Flowers grouped by type/form, then in general order of commonality (most common first), and then by flowering season. Poets and tazettas are more regionally confined, so are set at the end.

### Divisions

1 – Trumpet	7 – Jonquil
2 – Large Cup	8 – Tazetta
3 – Small Cup	9 – Poet
4 – Double	13 – Sprays

### Seasonality, in Zone 7b/8a

Early – February

Early Midseason – first week to two weeks in March

Midseason – high Midseason is mid-March

Late Midseason – after March 15

Late – April 1

## Yellow Trumpets

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### *N. pseudonarcissus* 13Y-Y

There seem to be two forms of this species trumpet – that in South Carolina, Georgia and north Florida, and another in Virginia, Ohio and other more northern locals. The Southeast Piedmont form is more distinctively two-tone, with petals paler than the trumpet; the northern form is more uniform in color. Also, those forms found in woodland situations appear larger in plant and flower than those found out in abandoned fields in full sun.

This is the most common daffodil in north Georgia, upland South Carolina, and north Alabama homestead sites. Found to east Texas. Some of its encountered common names include “Common daffodil,” “Early Virginia,” “Lent Lily;” in eastern Tennessee it’s called “Easter flower.”

Distinctive willowy form, its light colored petals cup around the trumpet and lightly twist (dog-eared). Early season.



**‘Golden Spur’ 1Y-Y (pre-1885)**

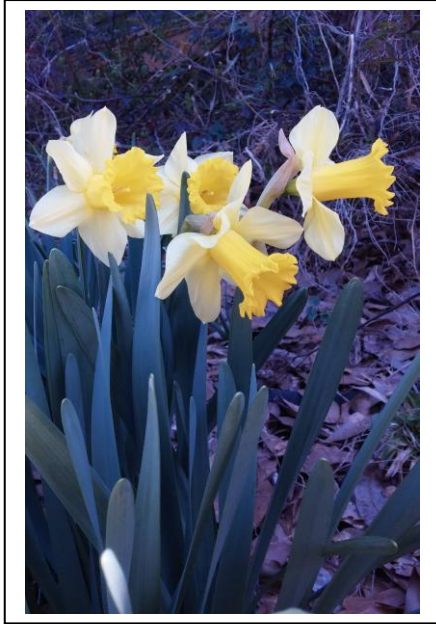
A flower given its name from its form – the petals seem to pull up and away and cup over trumpet, with a slight twist. The rim is noticeably “serrated” or jagged, its other distinctive feature. The petals are the same color as the trumpet – there is no noticeable two-tone effect. When the flower is first opened, it can appear similar to a solid-colored *N. pseudonarcissus*; it can take a few days for the petals to pull back into the “spur” form. One of earliest hybrids sold in America in the late 1800s, it was a stalwart trumpet in American catalogs into the early twentieth century. Interestingly, it was discovered on a Dutch estate in the mid 1800s. Early season.



From a mid-century Atlanta garden,  
newly opened



A mature flower



Note broad foliage

**‘Emperor’ 1Y-Y (pre-1869)**

An early “modern” form trumpet, and distinctively “two-toned.” The rim flares out from trumpet but does not “roll over,” and the corona tapers a bit from the rim down to the petals. The petals are noticeably a lighter color than trumpet, and curve over trumpet but curl back a bit. Distinctive wide, robust blue-green foliage, but only an average height plant. Found in better soils; seems to like a bit of shade in the afternoon. One of the early hybrids brought onto the American market in the late 1880s, it was widely sold well into the mid- twentieth century, so it is widely distributed. Midseason. Avg. diameter 3.5”



### **‘King Alfred’ 1Y-Y (1899) & ‘King Alfred’-type**

Of song and story, there are numerous flowers that look very similar to ‘King Alfred’ lurking in Victorian and early twentieth century gardens. The flower is a very slightly two-tone trumpet (petals slightly paler than corona); the petals slightly overlapping one-third at the base. What makes a ‘King Alfred’ a ‘King Alfred’, however, is a distinctive rim that is very flared/rolled – so when you look at the flower dead on, all you see is RIM. The trumpet itself is smooth with little ridging, and it doesn’t taper down to the petals. The rim roll can seem to get more pronounced as flower matures. (However, flowers in my garden *promised* to be true to name don’t have the same staggering rim roll seen in historic photographs.) The petals have minimal twist or curl. It was widely sold, but as commercial stocks were scrambled from an early date, it is hard to really identify. Thus it’s usually just lumped as ‘King Alfred’-type, just to be on the safe side. Early Midseason. Diameter avg. 3.75” to 4.0”

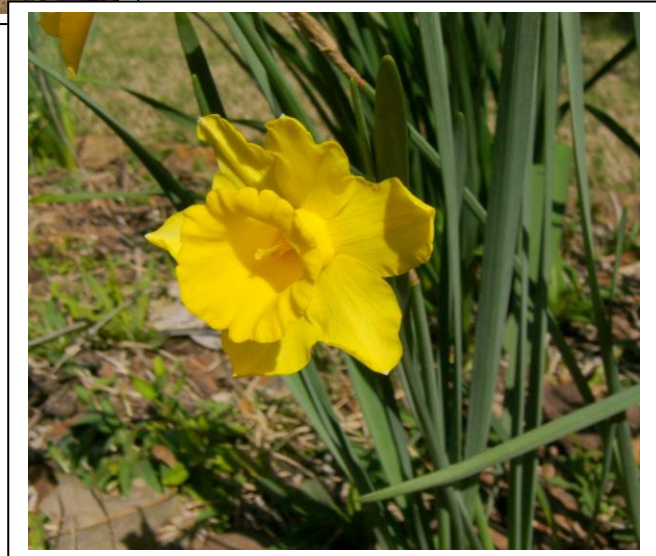


**‘Unsurpassable’ 1Y-Y (1923)**

This is a very tall plant with a very large flower which is slightly two-toned. The trumpet is large in profile (it tapers down a bit from below the rim to the petals), the rim expanded and distinctly jagged. If it’s big and blooming in February and jagged, chances are this is the flower. One of few trumpets to be considered a good repeat bloomer for the Deep South even by current garden standards. Found in 1920s-1940s era gardens. (Very similar to ‘Golden Harvest’ which is closer to a Midseason bloomer). (Very) Early season.



From a 1920s garden in Augusta, GA



***N. obvallaris* 13Y-Y**

Called “Tenby,” this is the national flower of Wales. The flower has an overall blocky appearance, and is a smaller flower; often it doesn’t seem to be a true trumpet. The petals are broad and slightly overlap, and are the same color as the trumpet. Rim has a slight flare to roll. The back of the flower is not funnel-shaped like other daffodils – instead it has a very narrow, long yellow tube between the stem and petals (just visible in the top image). Found on occasion in Georgia, and north Alabama; it became more common in the late Victorian era. It is a shorter stature plant with somewhat narrower foliage. One of first trumpets to bloom. Early season. Diameter avg. 2.75”





From a Victorian garden in Natchez, MS



'Helios', from a 1920s garden in Atlanta



From a cut flower patch in South Carolina



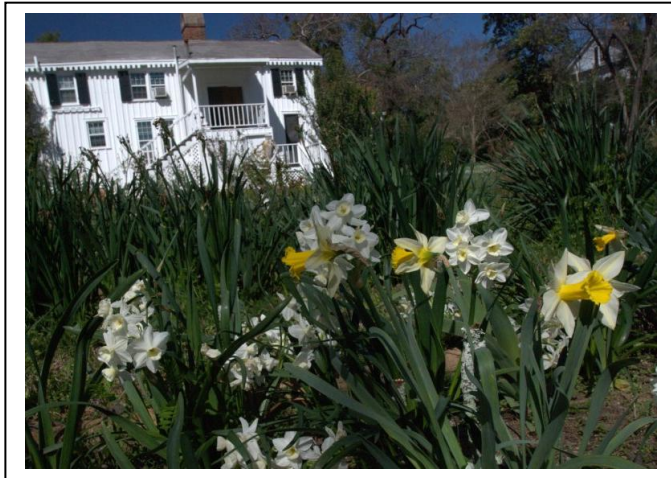
A modern form from a later garden

### Unknown All Yellows

There were dozens of yellow trumpets sold in America from the late 1800s until the early 1940s, that all vanished from the market after World War II when the modern bulb industry developed. Sorting through them, and all the 'Carlton' look-alikes, is more difficult than one would hope. Some will give a clue, such as 'Helios' (2Y-O, 1912) which shades lightly orange in the cup, and many never do. Another trumpet that should be lurking is 'Golden Harvest' (1920) – the offspring of 'King Alfred' and 'Golden Spur', it should look similar to 'Unsurpassable' except bloom a little later and have lighter colored petals for a two-tone look.

## Bicolor and White Trumpets

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'Empress' and 'Emperor' from an Arkansas garden



From a 1920s garden in Augusta, Georgia

### **'Empress' 1W-Y (pre-1869)**

The other half of the original dynamic duo introduced by William Backhouse in 1869. Petals white, slightly folded back, more cupped over trumpet, willowy in appearance. The trumpet is bright yellow, narrow at base ("waist") and slightly flared at the rim. The calyx (the part behind the petals that rises from the stem) goes from green to yellow up the backs of white petals. Broad foliage like 'Emperor.' Prefers rich, well-drained soil that is lightly shaded in summer. Midseason.



'Mrs. Ernest H. Krelage' a 1950s garden in Atlanta



From a 1900 garden in Virginia



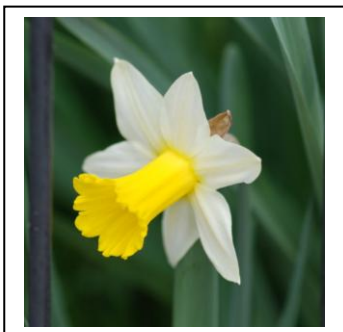
From a 1950s garden in Atlanta



Foundling, old Georgia garden



From a 1950s garden in east Georgia



Foundling, old Georgia garden

### Unknown Bicolor Trumpets

Many other bicolor trumpets have been sold over the years; one common one was 'Victoria' – which may still lurk here and there. Again, they will be found in woodland type settings – rich soils, well drained, and lightly shaded.



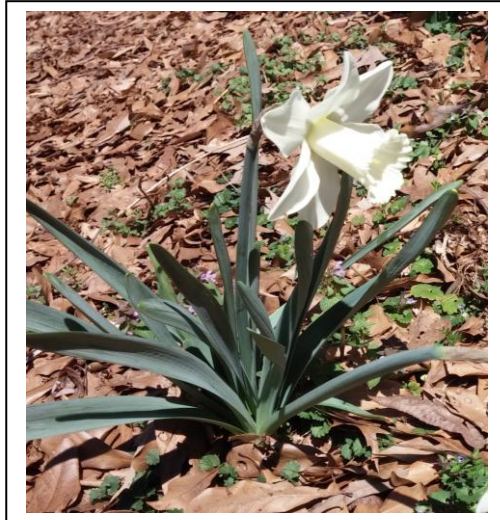
From northeast Georgia



From 1890s planting in Tennessee

### *N. moschatus* 13W-W

A flower with a distinctive nodding form (“swan’s neck”) and petals curved around trumpet. The trumpet tinted yellow fading to pale tinted white, petals white with green on the base. As flower ages, neck straightens out to disperse seed. Prefers a well-drained woodland soil with cool summer soil temperature. This general form was very popular in the 1890s, but was left aside when more modern forms came along, probably in part as these flowers are rather picky as to where they like to grow. Other old common names include horse neck, white goose neck jonquil, Nellie, Weeping March Flowers, The March Flowers, White Pipes, and Little Swan’s Neck Daffodils. The historic flowers found in old gardens are considered an old selection of the species, not necessarily in commerce. A distinct form has been found in two 1890s plantings, thought to possibly be a specific *N. moschatus* form sold by the great British daffodilian Peter Barr in the 1890s (see lower image). Slow to multiply. Early midseason.



**‘Beersheba’ 1W-W (1923)**

Trumpet opens pale, fades to (near) white depending upon amount of sun. Trumpet narrow at base (waist); petals narrower than ‘Mount Hood’, and are cupped over trumpet. As flower matures, stems tend to arch and lean downward. Found in later gardens in rich soils with light shade. Midseason.



**‘Mount Hood’ 1Y-Y (1938)**

Trumpet opens pale, fades to (near) white depending upon amount of sun. Trumpet rim wider in diameter and waist wider than ‘Beersheba’. Petals do not cup over trumpet. Has a very “blocky” appearance. Found in later gardens in rich soils with light shade. Midseason.

# Jonquils

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Recently store-bought



From antebellum garden in South Carolina



From northeast Georgia

## *N. jonquilla* 13Y-Y

The very definition of “dainty.” Called “Sweeties” and “Johnnyquills.” *Very* fragrant, petals rounded, very narrow foliage, very small florets, petals same color as cup. Long, fine, delicate foliage, very dark green and channeled. Found across the South. Variants are known from old garden sites; differences in bloom time, pointiness of petals, cup diameter and rim form are known. [The Pine Mills strain traces back to the early 1830s when brought by family’s ancestors to Texas from France by way of Virginia.] This is parent species from which all heirloom jonquils (and their fragrance) descend. Midseason to late Midseason, depending on the strain. Floret diameter avg. 1.25”



From a 1910s garden in eastern North Carolina. Image courtesy of Mary Kay Coyle



From a Nashville, Tenn. garden, planted 1946

***N. x odorus* 13Y-Y**

“Campernelle,” the most common jonquil across the South. A hybrid between *N. jonquilla* and *N. pseudonarcissus*. Narrow dark green foliage, lovely jonquil fragrance, slow to multiply. Famous for the 6-5-4 petal form of top floret six petals, second five and third floret with only four petals. As bulbs get larger, the stem will have more florets and those florets will have more petals. Can throw “half” flowers. Variations in petal form and rim form are known to exist. [The lower right image is of flowers bought from Dutch sources in 1946. Notice narrower petal form]. Dark channeled foliage stays mostly upright. Early to early Midseason. Floret diameter avg. 2.25” to 2.75”

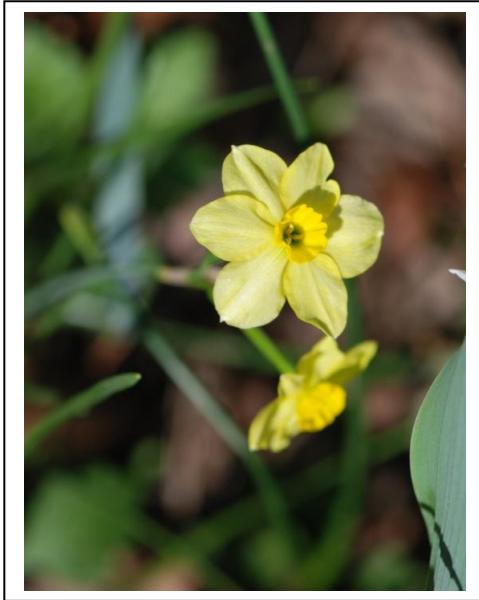


From a 1910s garden in coastal North Carolina.  
Image courtesy of Mary Kay Coyle

***N. x intermedius* 13Y-Y**

“Hens and biddies,” “Texas Stars;” sold in Victorian catalogs as “Etoile d’Or” (Star of Gold). A hybrid between *N. jonquilla* and *N. tazetta*. Found across the Deep and Coastal South. Narrow foliage is very long and channeled; a lighter green than other species jonquils. Small florets have pointed petals, petals are lighter in color than the cups. Lovely jonquil fragrance. Requires full sun and hot summer baking, so it is much more common further south than north. The imported Dutch form is a rounded petal form compared to the old American heirloom form. The florets can start blooming well down on short stems that grow as flowering progresses. Early midseason to Midseason. Floret diameter avg. 1.5” to 1.75”



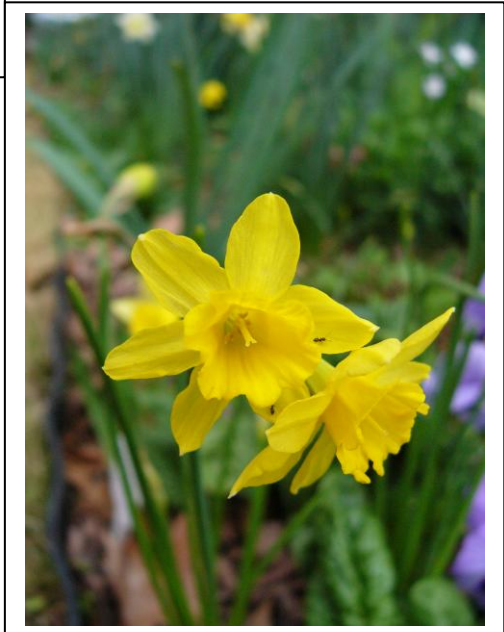


From a Piedmont South Carolina garden



***N. x tenuoir* 13W-Y**

Sold in the late 1800s as the “Silver jonquil,” it is a hybrid between *N. jonquilla* and *N. poeticus*. Rarely found in Victorian-era gardens, likely because of its being a small, delicate plant. Petals open pale yellow and fade to white; like *N. x medioluteus*, it usually has two florets to a stem. Very narrow dark green foliage belying it’s *N. jonquilla* parentage. Prefers richer soil and light shade as a poet descendent. Delightful jonquil fragrance. Late Midseason. Floret diameter avg. 1.5”



**‘Rugulosus’ 7Y-Y (pre-1819)**

“Jonquil.” Sold as an improvement on the old “Campernelle” (*N. x odorus*) jonquil. Solid dark yellow color, a more “modern” flower form. For being widely sold for a long period of time, it is rarely found. Early Midseason.

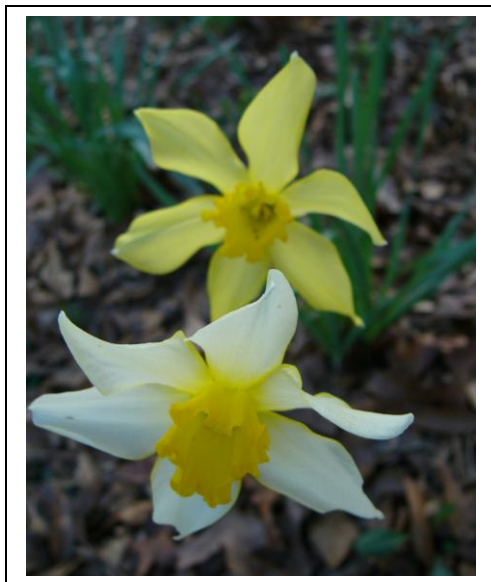
## Small Cups

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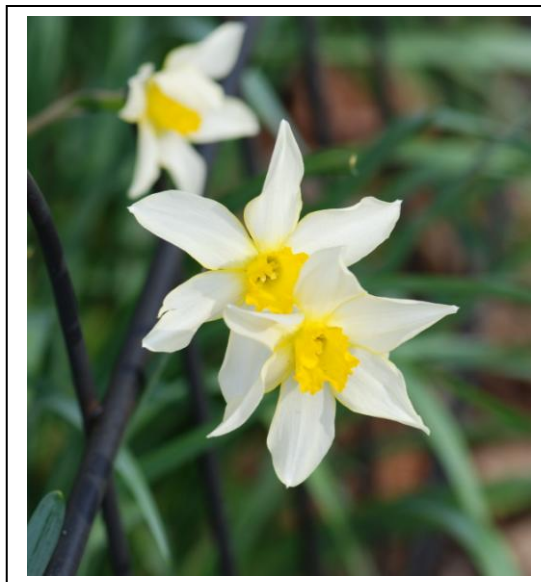


### **'Stella' 2W-Y (pre-1869)**

A long-petaled willowy form – very obvious an old Victorian flower. In American catalogs by 1891, 'Stella' became quite popular. A somewhat proportionally long cup, very crinkled, and bright yellow. The petals can open pale/primrose yellow and then fade to white, but more often seems to open nearly white. May have a faint rim ring on occasion. If in a poor situation (dense shade, poor soils) the petals can be extremely narrow, but will broaden over time in good garden soil with sun. Will throw flowers with eight petals. One of earliest hybrid whites to bloom, sometimes a full week before all others. Early season. Diameter avg. 3.25"



From an east Georgia garden, before 1913



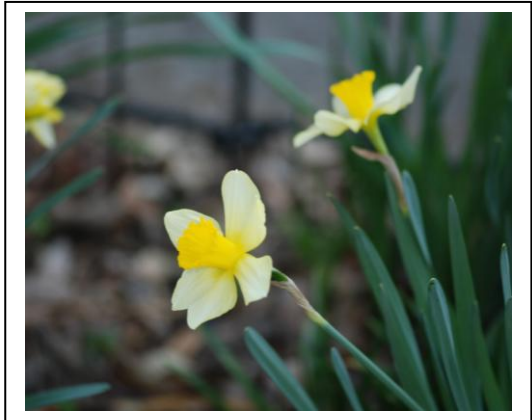
Rim due to cold snap, Atlanta

**‘Stella Superba’ 2W-Y (1899)**

A Dutch improvement on a popular flower; ‘Stella Superba’ was very widely sold. A robust plant and free bloomer. Petals open sulphur yellow, fade to near white to white particularly the farther south you are, usually with a yellow halo at the base. Petals are “shouldered” or broad at midpoint, then taper to a point. Usually no orange on rim, unless very cold at just the right time – and then rim ring does not last past first few days (and never burns so no crispy edge). No meaningful overlap of petals at the base to speak of (slight at best). Regularly throws eight petals. Also will turn completely upwards. Early Midseason season. Diameter avg. 3.25-3.5”



From a 1920s-1930s garden in Atlanta



**‘Sir Watkin’ 2Y-Y (pre-1868)**

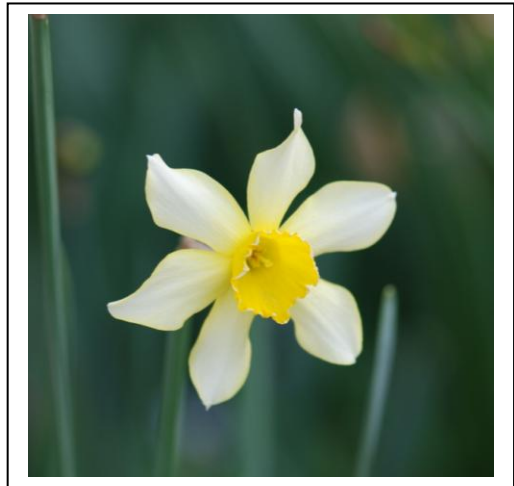
This flower has a distinctive goblet form in profile when mature. The rounded petals have minimal overlap, as petals slightly fold. A proportionally long cup but it’s not enough to be a trumpet and it has a slight flare at the rim. The primrose petals fade to near white in full sun; the stronger the sun the faster the fade, but the petals will hold a pale yellow halo at the base. Expanding crinkly cup. It was very popular flower when it hit the American market in early 1890s. Like the Stellas, it will throw flowers with eight petals. Smaller flowers are difficult to tell apart from ‘Stella Superba’ without some squinting. Prefers a richer soil. Does **not** hold well in summer storage – the bulbs are very prone to rot; it is much better to transplant when in green foliage. Early Midseason to Midseason. Diameter avg. 3.75” – 4.0”



From an unknown Georgia garden



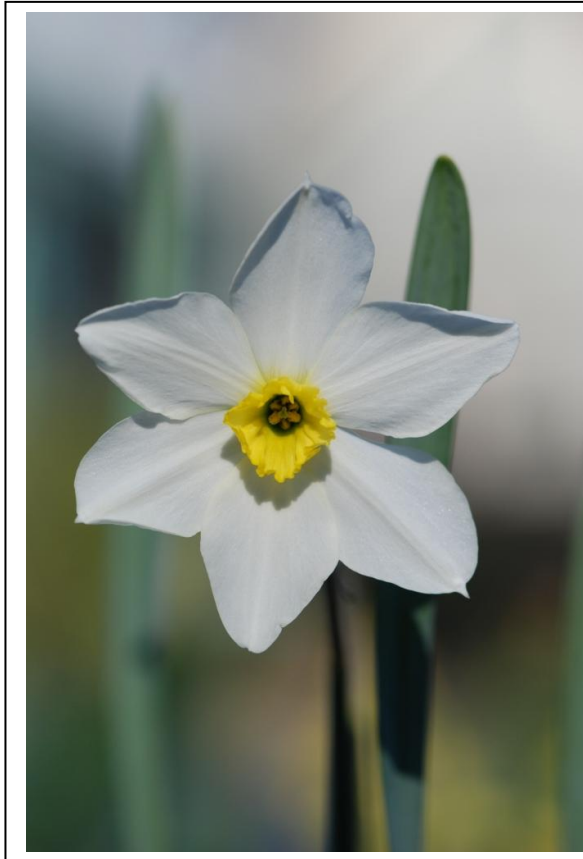
From a 1930s cut flower field



True to name stock from England, four years on

### **‘Conspicuus’ 2Y-YYO (1869)**

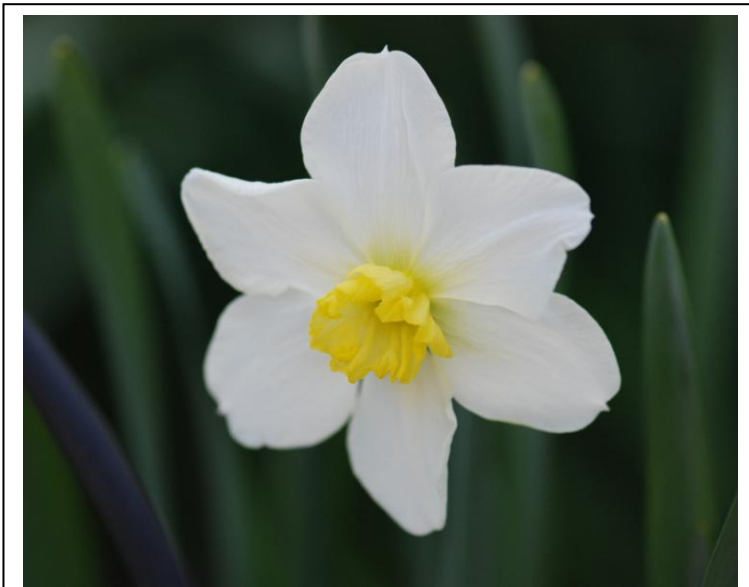
Petals open sulphur yellow, then fade in the sun to pale yellow / white, depending on the amount of sun. Open cup, not crinkly, broad in relation to flower size (one of the quickest ways to tell it apart from ‘Stella Superba’). The cup has an orange rim; the rim ring is much fainter if grown in full sun. Often the rim ring is only a faint burned edge with no hint of red present. The ends of the petals are more rounded than ‘Stella Superba’, and the base of the petals incur. A smaller flower, it has a blocky appearance, and sits very perkily atop a long stem. It prefers a more woodland situation – richer soil and lightly shaded (it doesn’t like full sun in solid clay). Blooms early Midseason to Midseason, although listed as late Midseason. Diameter avg. 2.75” – 3.25”



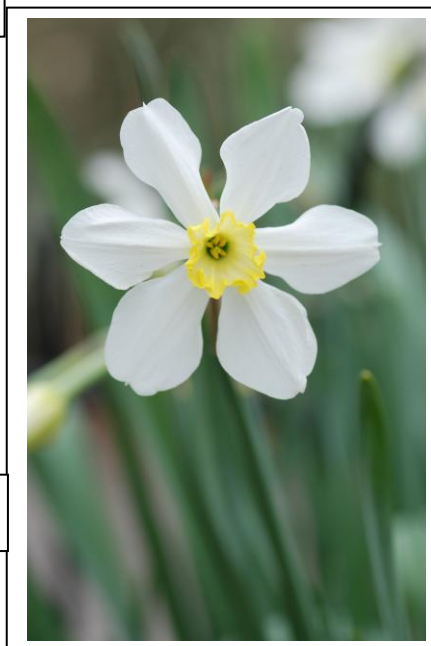
Newly opened flower

### **‘White Lady’ 3W-Y (1897)**

Distinguishing ‘White Lady’ from ‘Queen of the North’ takes some practice and patience. The petals of ‘White Lady’ are pointier than ‘Queen of the North’ – particularly topmost petal – it doesn’t seem “flat” across the top; this is easiest to spot when the flower first opens. The cup seems more open, slightly smaller in diameter, shorter in length and less crinkly than ‘Queen of the North’, and it is easier to see the stamens (especially when the flower first opens). When the cup is first opening it can have a hint of green and a “green eye” looking into the cup. There is no hint of a rim ring; the cup doesn’t seem to fade (to the same degree) as does ‘Queen of the North’. The green eye seems to hold as flower ages (but this may be just because it’s easier to look into the cup because it’s a bit shorter); petals broaden but do not paddle wheel as can ‘Queen of the North’. Requires a richer soil; found more in Zones 7a and northward. Midseason to late Midseason bloomer. Diameter avg. 2.75” – 3.00”



Newly opened flower



Mature flower with faded cup and curled petals

### **‘Queen of the North’ 3W-Y (1908)**

This is the pair to ‘White Lady’ and it is hard to tell from ‘White Lady’ at first look. It has broad white petals, a small yellow cup (but larger and a bit longer than ‘White Lady’) that is very crinkly, and many years no hint of an orange-ish rim ring. The tops of the outer set of three petals are almost flat across the top. Only rarely, with abnormal cold weather, any rim color. Minimal to no incurling of the petals at the base when the flower first opens. Later the flower can become very “paddle wheel” in form when the curl sets in, but this may be a latent stress reaction (happier flowers may curl less). The interior of cup fades somewhat as flower ages, so a mature flower has the appearance of a lemon yellow rim ring. A tough plant, able to withstand hotter conditions (it grows as far south as north Florida), it is more widely found than other small-cupped white daffodils. Midseason to late Midseason. Diameter avg. 2.75” to 3.0”

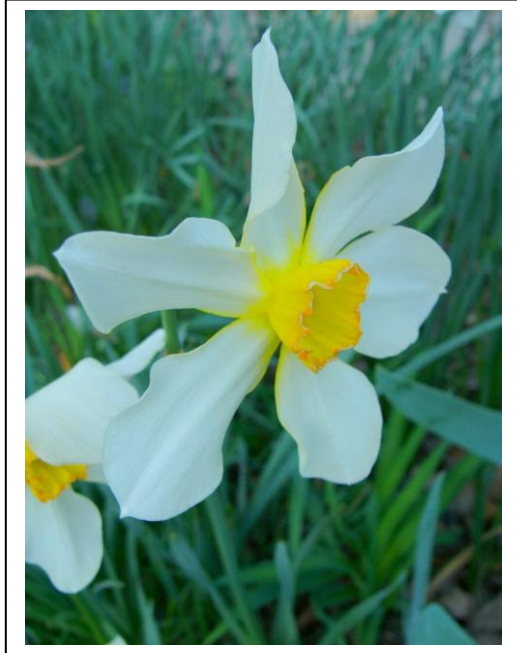




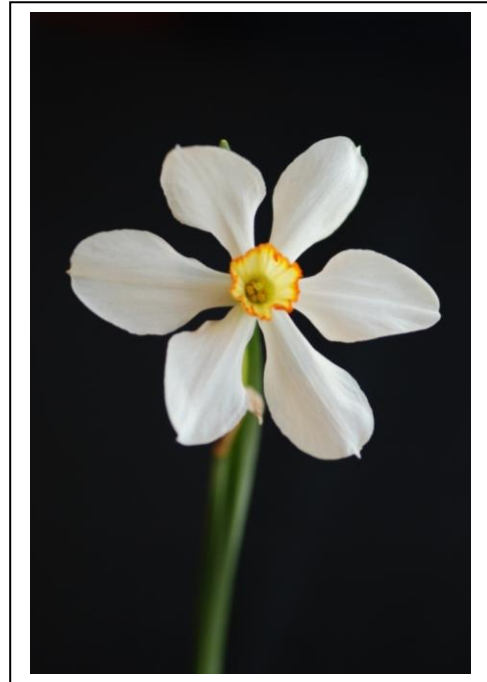
From a early 1900s garden in Virginia

***N. x medioluteus* 13W-Y**

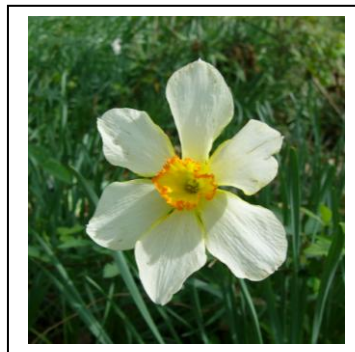
A common flower that for most daffodil folks needs no introduction. Its old botanical name was *N. biflorus*, which is how it was sold in old catalogs; current common names include “Twin Sisters,” “Cemetery Ladies” in north Alabama and “April Beauties” in north Louisiana. Elizabeth Lawrence referred to them as “April white narcissus.” It is a hybrid between *N. tazetta* and *N. poeticus*, but leans more to the poet parent than the tazettas parent. Its yellow cup is small and boxy in appearance; sometimes it evidences a lightly burned rim edge although no red color ever shows. The foliage is narrow, medium height, a slightly darker bluish-green, and twists, reflecting its poet heritage. It is one of last heirloom daffodils to bloom, usually closing out the season in an old garden, and it’s a bit more shade tolerant than other daffodils. Almost always two florets on a stem, but weak bulbs will put up only one floret. A tough plant, commonly found, but notorious for not blooming in (lower) Zone 8b. Floret diameter avg. 2.0”



From true to name stock, full sun and clay soil



From a Louisiana garden



From a 1930s cut flower field in Atlanta

### Seagull 3W-Y (1893)

A large flower when happy (smaller when not so happy), it has a somewhat floppy demeanor. 'Seagull' consistently has a rim ring that eventually fades away (unlike 'Stella Superba' which is very weather dependent) and a small cup for such a big flower. There is no overlap in the petals, and they get that 'paddle wheel' shape when mature. Three of the six petals also are very rounded at the end, not as pointy as other old form flowers. A popular flower for some time, it holds on in the South as it is an Early Midseason to Midseason bloomer. Prefers richer soil and light shade. Diameter avg. 3.25"



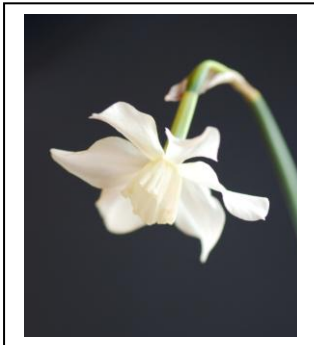
From a central Georgia garden



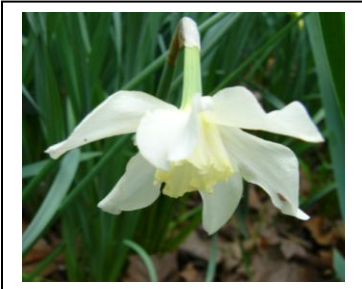
Mature flower



Newly opened



'Mrs. Langtry'  
From northwest Louisiana. True to name stock from America



'Mrs. Langtry'  
From Atlanta. True to name stock from England.



**'Minnie Hume' 3W-W (pre-1869)**

A smaller flower, facing partly outward, narrow petals, lemon yellow cup that fades, expanding cup sometimes widely so. Narrow, short foliage that twists, bluer than "Twin Sisters." As 'Minnie Hume' was not widely sold in the late 1800s to early 1900s, but 'Mrs. Langtry' was, it is tempting to speculate the flower was substituted when supplies ran low, as the rim ring pattern is the same in both flowers. Flower looks up, does not nod down (as does 'Mrs. Langtry'), and has a more expanded cup. Not commonly found, but found in east Georgia cut flower field and in central Georgia old garden. ('Mrs. Langtry' does not hold on in Georgia or Louisiana). Early midseason. Diameter avg. 2.25"



From a central Georgia garden, ca. 1909

**‘Lucifer’ 2W-YOO (pre-1890)**

Narrow white petals with a distinct greenish-yellow halo at base. Proportionally a longer cup, the rim glows reddish-orange (and burns). Petals are noticeably narrower than most other varieties – a very early Victorian flower form. Early Midseason to Midseason.



From a mid-century Knoxville, Tenn. garden

**Saint Olaf 3W-W (1913)**

Very similar to ‘White Lady’ when opening, its light yellow cup fades to white in a few days. Found in Tennessee and north Florida by way of Alabama. Midseason to late Midseason.



**Dick Wellband 2W-O (1921)**

A more modern flower, but the true old form has a case of the flops (modern strains have straightened up petals). Rarely found (probably filched as soon as it appears). From an Alabama garden. Midseason to late Midseason.



From a 1930s cut flower field



From north Florida by way of Alabama



From a 1930s cut flower field



From Natchez, MS



From north Florida

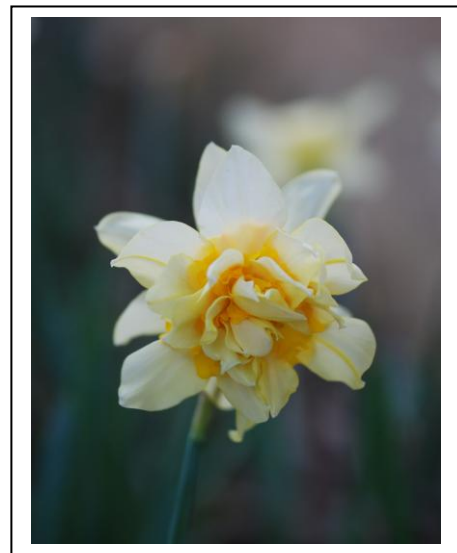
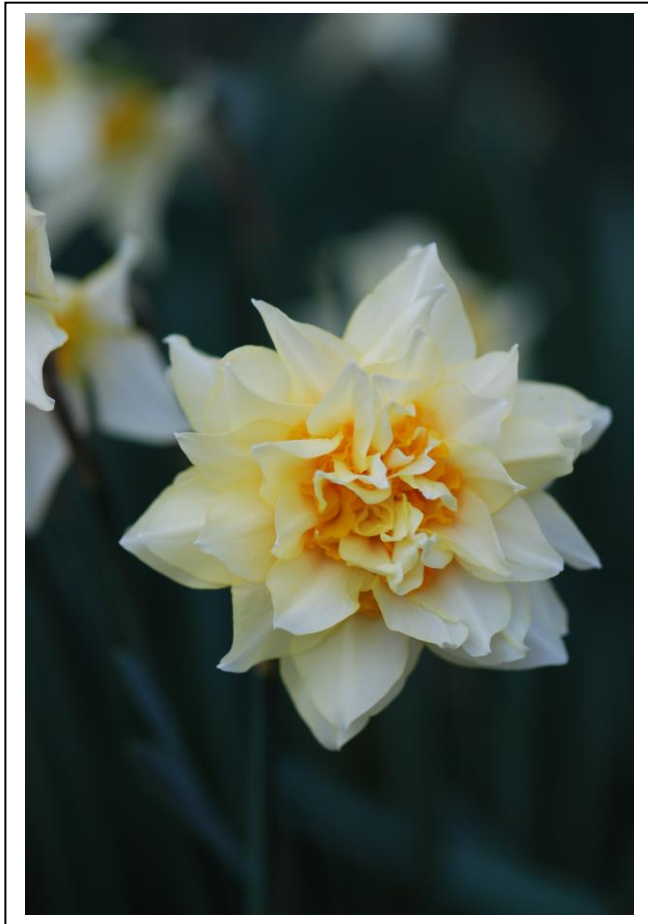
### Unknown Old Starry Daffodils

Numerous old starry white forms are found; years in one place have lessened their true form (crowding, lack of regular fertilizing, a little too much shade). They are more common further into Zones 7a and above, and in lightly shaded locations which keep the bulbs cooler and soil nutrients a bit higher. Older forms are starrier with more space between the petals, flowers hybridized in the twentieth century have broader petals and more overlap at the base (are “imbricate”).

In lightly shady conditions with rich soil, early Midseason yellow starry daffodils lurk. When moved to a sunny garden, the next year the petals can show the infamous three-day-fade pattern, and the rim color fade, so identifying these flowers is very problematic. Further north, these flowers may not fade.

## Doubles

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### **‘Orange Phoenix’ 4W-O (pre-1731)**

Often lumped in as “Butter and Eggs” and in old texts “Fried Eggs” or “Eggs and Bacon.” This is one of the three ‘Phoenix’ form doubles that (vexingly) all shade into one another. The form is somewhat variable based on the season – flower forms can be misshapen if a dry spring or temperatures fluctuated too greatly. This is the one Phoenix that blanches to a complete white. Darkness or saturation of color in the petaloids is weather dependent; in warm winters it’s yellow, cold winters can actually produce true orange. The more rain and the more evenly cool the winter, the better the flower’s form and size. So a bad year by tazettas is a good year by doubles. Early midseason to Midseason. Diameter avg. 3.0” – 4.0”, seasonally dependent.



From a 1920s-1930s cut flower farm in north Georgia



### **‘Sulphur Phoenix’ 4W-Y (pre-1820)**

This is Phoenix form number two, and may be the most common of the three. Old names include the ubiquitous “Butter and Eggs;” in old texts it was “Coddlin and Cream.” The petals stay a very pale yellow (or “sulphur”), while the petaloids are dark yellow/orange. This Phoenix seems to be the one to throw many forms, from full doubles to a center ball of petals with only back petals fully extended. It also seems to have forms that fade to almost complete white with orangy-yellow petaloids. Its variability in overall form seems to be a key indicator. Can be hard to differentiate from ‘Orange Phoenix’ and ‘Butter and Eggs’. Early midseason to Midseason. Diameter avg. 3.0” to 4.0”, seasonally dependent.



‘Butter and Eggs’ in full sun at Oakland Cemetery, Atlanta, in a period planting. Note what appears to be a paler ‘Sulphur Phoenix’ in the background.

### **‘Butter and Eggs’ 4Y-Y**

Yes, Charlotte, there is a true “Butter and Eggs.” Its petals are a strong clear yellow, center petaloids dark yellow/orange. Ideally the main petals and the petaloids are all the same strong yellow color. Not found to date in Coastal South. Hard to distinguish from a ‘Sulphur Phoenix’ that is not evidencing any fading. Early Midseason to Midseason. Diameter avg. 3.0” – 4.0”, seasonally dependent.





From a very old Virginia plantation,  
After a very long cold winter in  
Atlanta

After long cold winter, a well-formed flower in Atlanta



A more usual appearance



Unhappy buds after weather got too warm  
and dry – thought by some to possibly be a  
different strain



### **‘Telamonius Plenus’ 4Y-Y (pre-1620)**

Aka “Van Sion.” “Butter and Eggs,” “Easter Flower” in western North Carolina mountains, “Old Fashioned” in Ohio, “the green mop” in Texas and “green daffodil” in central Alabama. In the cool damp mountains, the petals in the cup double, but not the petals, so the trumpet is filled with ruffled petals. (May also have been called “Fried Eggs” in piedmont North Carolina). Usually the flower looks like it blew up, or is a total wreck. Highly variable form. Strong plant, wide foliage, often virused unfortunately. Early season. Size can vary drastically.



**‘Flore Pleno’ 4Y-Y (pre-1611)**

This is the “Queen Anne’s Double Jonquil,” sold in catalogs for most of 1800s as “small double jonquil.” It is the double form of *N. jonquilla*. It has thin long foliage and is a delicate fine plant, very similar to *N. jonquilla*. The petals are rounded, giving this small flower a rosette form. Likes damp conditions when growing, and hot and dry when dormant. Very rarely found. Late Midseason to Late.



From a 1930s cut flower field

**‘Double Campernelle’ 4Y-Y (1900)**

The double form of *N. x odorus*. A small flower, petals pointy in form, and all solid yellow petals and petaloids (no fading, inner small petaloids the same color as the main large petals). Narrow dark green Jonquil foliage. Jonquil fragrance. Not commonly found. Midseason.



'Butterfly' in 1930s cut flower field, Atlanta



Unidentified double trumpet from 1930s cut flower field in Memphis



Double Chinese Sacred Lily



'Twink'

### Rare Doubles

On rare occasion other doubles survive. Further north more doubles survive, such as the all-white 'Daphne' in Virginia.

'Butterfly' 4W-Y (1904), grown commercially in the 1930s, is a double of 'Stella' and similarly a Midseason bloomer, but for whatever reason is now very rarely found. Diameter 2.5" to 2.75"

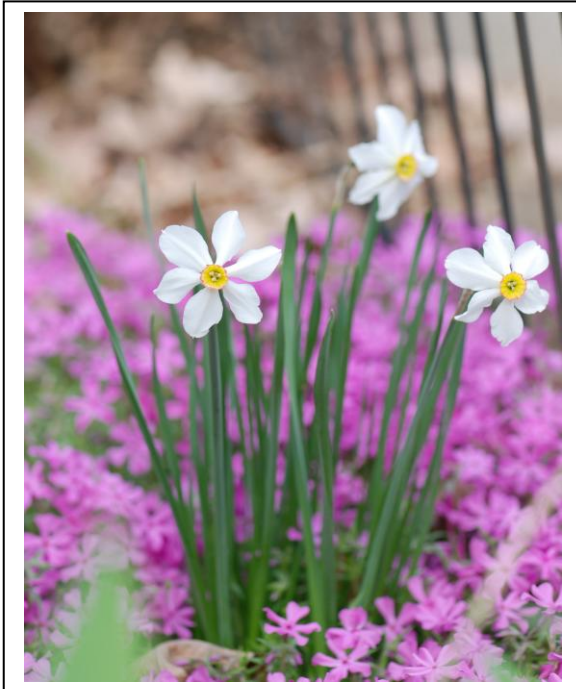
An extremely rare unknown double trumpet found with 'Telamonius Plenus' in cut flower patches in Memphis and Missouri. Smaller stature plant, narrower leaves, small bloom compared to the sturdy standby. More cold-needy. Midseason. Diameter 2.5"

"Double Chinese Sacred Lily" is extremely cold tender, not surviving much beyond 30 miles from the Gulf of Mexico in Florida, and similarly in very warm areas in Texas and Louisiana. The double of "Chinese Sacred Lily," it has its amazing fragrance.

'Twink' 4W-O (1925), rarely found in 1930s-1940s gardens. Large flower with large petals – not as pointed in feel as 'Orange Phoenix'. Midseason. Diameter avg. 4.0"

## Poets

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From a midcentury garden near Atlanta



### **‘Ornatus’ 9W-YR (1870)**

A small blocky flower and a small plant. The petals are pale yellow when opening then quickly fade to white. Light shade helps keep the red rim from burning. It has exceedingly narrow white and black lines or bands between main yellow of cup and red rim ring. Found in Texas (thought to be by way of Tennessee immigrants) and on occasion in Georgia (even rarely in south Georgia). Best description: cute as a button. Petals can reflex back as flower ages. In American catalogs by 1882. Midseason. Diameter avg. 2.0” to 2.25”



From a 1930s garden in Louisiana

***N. radiiflorus* 13W-**

‘Ornatus’ is derived from this dainty species poet. Small and cute, its petals have as pronounced backward curl for the life of the flower. Small plant. Rarely found. Diameter avg. 2.0” to 2.25”



**‘Actaea’ 9W-YYR (1919)**

Substantially larger than other poets found in old gardens – the large size gives it a modern appearance. Has been found in mid-century gardens with good soil and light shade. Late midseason. Diameter avg. 3.0”



***N. poeticus var. recurvus* 13W-**

Common name is “Pheasant’s Eye.” White petals curve backwards, hence its name. Found on occasion at north Alabama homestead sites, and in a circa 1926 central Virginia garden. Petals seem a bit rectangular, often blocked at the end; they appear to fold in half and then curve backward. Somewhat larger than ‘Ornatus’. Does not hold on in hot summer locations (out of the mountains). Late Midseason to Late. (Species poets are not color coded due to slight variability)



From a 1920s garden in Augusta, Georgia

**Unidentified Poets**

On occasion, hybrid poets are encountered, lurking in old cut flower fields and gardens, particularly in Zones 7a northward. Identifying them can be difficult to the untrained eye, requiring plenty of squinting at slight differences in cup coloration and petal form. Finding a poets expert is almost a requirement.

# Tazettas

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Cemetery in Boston, Georgia

## **‘Paper White Grandiflorus’ 8W-W (pre-1887)**

“Narcissus” or just “paperwhites.” This hybrid was introduced to the commercial trade in 1889 as an improvement on the old “Paper White.” It was carried in American nursery catalogs by 1892 and quickly dominated the indoor flower market (along with “Chinese Sacred Lily”). It has larger florets, larger trusses of florets, thicker petal substance, and slightly different scent than the old strain. It was planted in cemeteries along the Gulf coast as a symbol of the Resurrection from the late 1800s to the 1920s. (In some Mississippi and Louisiana communities, only paperwhites, ‘Grand Primo Citroniere’ and *N. italicus* were allowed to be planted inside cemeteries; they were called “Sinless Sisters” or “White Angels.”) Blooms November to December. Floret diameter avg. 35mm to 40mm.



### Old Paperwhite strains

If you live in the coastal South and sleuth old garden plantings, you may have noticed some of these flowers. Numerous kinds of paperwhites (the oldest likely wild strains of *N. papyraceus* from Italy and southern France) survive in old gardens from coastal Georgia and Florida, to antebellum gardens in Natchez Mississippi, to Texas. For a longer discussion, see *Daffodils in Florida, a Field Guide to the Coastal South*. Bloom dates for Tallahassee.

Top left: Standard old 'Paper White' sold after the Civil War through to around 1903-1905. Petals have thin substance. Fragrance varies from sharp to minimal. Standard sized plant. Blooms November to December.

Top right: Small floret paperwhite, possibly called "Snowflake." Dwarf plant, lighter blue-green foliage. Blooms November to December.

Bottom right: Starry petalled, small cup form; variety of small cup forms have been found in antebellum gardens. Blooms late winter to very early spring.

Bottom left: 'Paper White Grandiflorus'





From a central Georgia garden, ca. 1909

**‘Grand Primo Citronière’ 8W-Y (pre-1780)**

A.k.a. “Grand Primo.” This is one of the most common tazettas because it is one of the toughest old birds going. Called “Old Fashioned” in central-south Georgia; otherwise often just called “Narcissus.” In Natchez it’s called “paperwhite.” It is found as far north as Atlanta and in north Alabama cemeteries; common in coastal South and east Texas. The wide cup begins as a creamy yellow, then fades unevenly over three days often to white (the “three day fade”), and can be uneven in appearance from floret to floret. Makes a large plant and a very large bulb. Its fragrance is light to faint. Early Midseason. Floret diameter avg. 30 to 35mm



An old strain in Louisiana by way of Virginia prior to the Civil War, nicknamed “Granny’s Grandiflora”



Florida/Georgia strain,  
before fade



Florida/Georgia strain,  
after fade

### ‘Grand Primo Citronière’ variants

Back in the late 1700s and early 1800s, British botanists became of the opinion that ‘Grand Primo Citronière’ was actually a species tazetta that had become domesticated by Dutch florists. Starting in the 1630s, the Dutch florists began hybridized their own tazettas, and probably grew on “Grand Primo” (and others) from seed – creating their own strains – as well as early on simply digging from different spots of the same population (and as wild flowers go, different spots give you slightly different flowers).

A number of strains of “Grand Primo” seem to lurk across the South. They vary slightly from the “norm,” from differences in floret appearance to slight shifts in blooming time.



A "Pearl" from Natchez, MS



A "Pearl" from Augusta, GA

### **'White Pearl' 8W-W (pre-1861)**

The official name for the varied clan of tazettas called "Pearl." Seems to be more common in Mississippi, Louisiana and east Texas. Its small cups open citron yellow and quickly fade to white (the "three day fade"); sometimes they open only a pale cream. Petals are more narrow and pointed in form than "Grand Primo" and have good substance, and the cups are smaller. (The pale cup, fade pattern and pointier petals of good substance are the basics of the "Pearl" clan). Per tazetta expert Dr. William R.P. Welch of California, there are three known strains of 'White Pearl' (and two other strains were selected and registered - 'Polly's Pearl' and 'Early Pearl'). 'White Pearl' is a medium sized plant for a tazetta with broad leaves. It has a lighter and sweeter fragrance than 'Grand Primo Citroniere', blooms later and has thicker petal substance. Midseason. Floret diameter avg. 35mm



From a 1920s garden in Augusta, GA



From a mid-century east Georgia garden

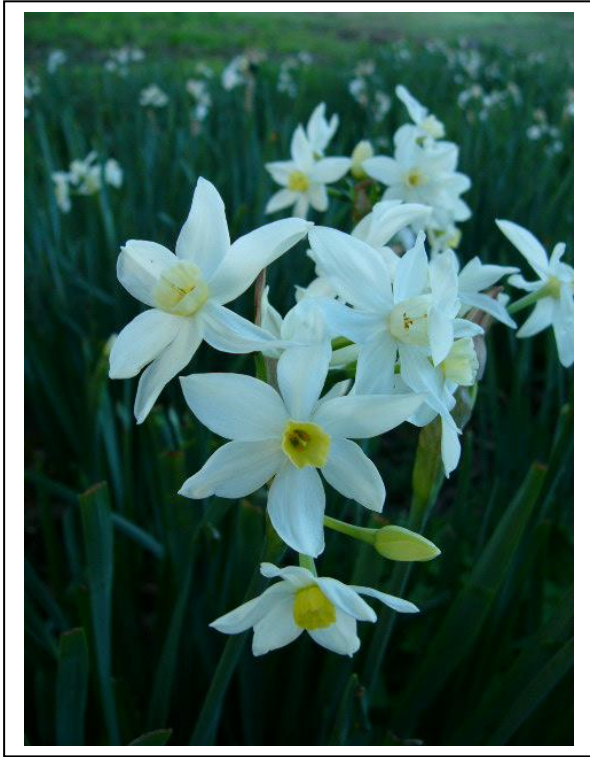
### **‘Grand Monarque’ 8W-Y (pre-1759)**

Found in Mississippi and Georgia gardens and in north Alabama cemeteries; it has not been found in old gardens in Florida. It was widely sold through the 1800s and into the 1900s. Its medium-wide cup color is lightly greenish-yellow that does not fade to white (although may fade in a really bad season as flower is going down). Strong cup rim, so cups seem strongly defined and not floppy like “Grand Primo.” The petals have good substance, not translucent. The florets make a well-defined cluster. Nice fragrance. Broad dark (yellow-) green foliage is somewhat short for a tazetta, as opposed to taller and more blue-green foliage of many other true tazettas. Early to early Midseason. Floret diameter avg. 35mm.



***N. tazetta* var. *lacticolor* 13W-Y or “Chinese Sacred Lily”**

Once you’ve seen (and smelled) one, you’ll never confuse it with another tazetta. Cold-tender, not found further north than 60 miles north of Gulf Coast. Common in historic yards in downtown Apalachicola, Florida. It was introduced to the American market from China in the late 1880s, and with ‘Paper White Grandiflorus’ came to quickly dominate the trade. The cups have very thick substance, seem almost hard; can shade towards orange-ish. Not many florets per stem. Amazing fragrance. Large plant. Winter bloomer. Floret diameter avg. 35mm to 40 mm



***N. italicus* 13W-Y**

Interestingly this far-flung plant was never sold in an American catalog, unlike its other brethren tazettas. Called simply “paperwhite” in Natchez (its common name is “Minor Monarque”), it is possible *N. italicus* stock was simply mixed in with other paperwhite bulbs originally dug and sold in Italy and later southern France. Found in old gardens from north Florida to east/coastal Texas. Large florets with very long narrow petals compared to other tazettas. Small yellow cups, some fading with age. There is some evidence to suggest there may be a small-cupped strain lurking about. Tall plant. Cold tender; but has been seen in an older intown Atlanta garden in a protected spot. Very Early season / late Winter bloomer. Floret diameter avg. 50mm to 55mm.



**‘Nat Williams’ 8W-Y (pre-2003)**

A re-registered old Dutch tazetta – thought now to be possibly ‘Grootvorst’ (pre-1844) based on cup color and fading pattern. The cups open buttery yellow then fade to yellowish cream – but not to white like a “Pearl.” Petals have good substance, and are “pointy” compared to other tazettas with broader, rounder petals. A tall plant and floriferous. Sweet fragrance (lighter and sweeter than ‘Grand Primo Citroniere’). Found from coastal Georgia over to Mississippi. (This flower’s re-registered name is in honor of Nat Williams of Thomasville, Georgia – an avid early daffodilian in the Deep South. This flower came to everyone’s attention first through Nat – and his stock originally came from his aunt’s garden in Quitman). Late winter to very early spring bloomer. Floret diameter avg. 35mm



From a mid-century garden in Tallahassee; thought to be 'Soleil d'Or'



Unknown dwarf, from Victorian garden, Monticello, Florida



A pale yellow dwarf, from a Victorian garden Monticello, Florida



### **The barbarous host of unnamed tazettas**

As early as the 1790s, botanists were despairing of ever getting their collective minds wrapped around two hundred years of tazetta hybridizing by the Dutch. Since then, hundreds of tazettas have been hybridized and lost, and they still drive folks absolutely nuts.

Pictured here are some tazettas found in gardens that have yet to be identified. As nurserymen didn't bother to take photos of tazettas, and their descriptions are so similar in old catalogs, the chances of ever truly identifying them is slim at best. Their importance is great not only for what once grew in Southern gardens, but also as repositories of lost genetic material from the lost species plants of the Mediterranean. For hundreds of years, nurserymen and their suppliers just went to wild stands of tazettas and dug – so that much is now extinct. Their progeny in our gardens are all that's left of what was a thriving tradition of growing “polyanthus narcissus” in the parlor from the 1600s to the early 1900s.