

# Alpine Garden Club of British Columbia



*Narcissus* 'Mallee' AGM 2007 Brian Duncan

**Special *Narcissus* Issue**

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## **EVENTS**

### **Sep 9, 2015 SUE MILLIKEN AND KELLY DODSON: HUNTING FOR NEW PLANTS IN SICHUAN, GUIZHOU AND GUANGXI**

Kelly and Sue have spent their lives learning about and working with plants in nurseries and botanic gardens as well as designing and creating fine private gardens. Their nursery, **Far Reaches Farm**, in Port Townsend, WA is regarded as having the largest collection of uncommon ornamentals in the state. Their emphasis is on perennials, but they have an ever increasing selection of bulbs, alpines, trees and shrubs. Many of these new plants have come from their seed collecting expeditions in Asia. Their talk will focus on one such recent collecting trip and how some of those collections are adapting and growing in their gardens.

**September 19th, 12- 4 PM- our Fall plant sale at the Van Dusen!**

### **October 14th- Egan Davies- Alpines of the Balkans**

An educator by trade and a gardener by profession, Davies is currently an instructor in UBC's Horticulture Training Program. A Capilano College grad, his show focuses on a recent trip to the Balkans with a look at some alpines.

### **November 11th Paul Spriggs: David Douglas in North America**

Spriggs from Victoria is an all round landscaper and crevice garden construction specialist that learned this craft from ZZ. He will talk on David Douglas and his exploration and collections in N. America.

## **LINKS**

[http://www.tulipsinthewild.com/maps/tulip\\_origin\\_map.html](http://www.tulipsinthewild.com/maps/tulip_origin_map.html)

An excellent interactive map of many species tulips with great *in situ* photos. Developed by **Eric Breed** of Lisse, Holland, there is a book with the same title available at the [Amsterdam Tulip Museum](#). They say, "*Tulips in the Wild* features

photography shot over two decades by five adventurous Dutch friends and tulip hunters on expeditions to the often remote regions where tulips originated.”

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**John Richards** is always worth following but this particular entry on why and how he grafts *Daphne*. A really good, practical visual entry. Thanks again John. <http://www.alpinegardensociety.net/diaries/Northumberland/+August+/603/>

Last May John and his wife made a trip to the Velebit Mtns in Croatia and found what might be a new *Daphne alpina* subspecies: <http://www.alpinegardensociety.net/diaries/Northumberland/+May+/566/> The trip sounded terrific and relatively easy- both physically and financially.

**Anne Wright** has it going with *Narcissus* and *Galanthus*. Besides her own small *Narcissus* hybrids, she also exclusively sells the seeds from master *Narcissus* breeder **Brian Duncan**. Check out her *Narcissus* list here: <http://www.dryad-home.co.uk/pages/Narcissus%20summer%202015.html>

**Kurt Vickery** has an amazing list of *Narcissus* seed. [kvickery67@btinternet.com](mailto:kvickery67@btinternet.com)

## ROCK ON!

They came early and they came often. I'm talking *Narcissus* or just plain old daffs to most of us. I thought that a wide-ranging discussion about them might be timely and keep them fresh in your mind as we get closer to September when daffs need to be planted out. Unlike tulips, daffs need to be planted out ASAP as their roots take longer to establish in the last warm days of the year.

Daffs are one of those staples of any garden, alpine or not. **William Robinson**, writing in *The Alpine flowers for gardens* in 1903 said, “*Although most of these handsome plants are independent of the rock-garden, and its advantages, and grow freely in the coldest soils, one of the most beautiful things we can do is to keep the dwarfest and choicest of them for growing through mossy dwarf plants on the rock-garden, and among the groups of rock shrubs. I have never seen anything more beautiful in nature or in gardens than grassy banks planted with the smaller Narcissi in the gardens at Warley Place. The effect is all the more precious, coming so early in the Spring.*” ( pp 264-5)

Robinson used to plant out 100,000 daffs *annually* on his Gravetye manor estate in Sussex. And, no...they were't all dwarf either. The man that inspired **Reginald Farrer** was effusive in his praise for the daff. It was around the time (1903) of this alpine book by Robinson that the first daffodil society was formed. And what a group of horticultural luminaries it was.

I wonder what he would think about the self-righteous bloke that started the I HateDaffs blog? Here's the story: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1265084/I-hate-daffodils--says-wild-flower-lover-launching-man-campaign-rid-countryside-mass-produced-bulbs-look-like-lipstick-Mona-Lisa.html>

Of course, to be fair his is a plea for restraint and a call for subtlety in wild roadside and open meadow plantings.

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They are also one of those flowers that made a primal imprint on our childhood memory and, as such, daffs have a universal appeal.



white daffs from a British periodical 1890

They were one of the first flowers to be sought after by the *fleuristes curieux* and **Nicholas Robert** was the first artist to accompany a botanical expedition and his best results were stunning drawings of *Narcissus*.

I had a number of small species flower for me this Spring including *N. rupicola*, *N. confusus* and *N. assoanus*. This last one I grew from seed and I was really looking forward to it after 4 years. In late March, I'd seen the bud swell up and made a mental note to check on it.

A few days later, I was wandering through the garden in early afternoon when the sun had broke out and really injected some heat into the land. I went over to the *assoanus* spot. I was crouching down to get a closer look, when I noticed a garter



snake had taken up a warm meditation position on a piece of driftwood right in front of it just inches away. The snake was mesmerized, looking right at the

daff, soaking up the heat and he/she simply glowed. I was mesmerized by the snake's reaction *and* the beauty of this daff species.

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And, no, I didn't get a pic because by the time I thought about it and had gone back into the house, he had slithered away.



Here it is June and I have collected seed from this daff and others and I've planted them fresh into pots. This approach yields germination the following March there or thereabouts.

<left the mesmerizing *N. assoanus*

below pics of *N. rupicola* that I sourced from Roger Barlow a few years back



*N. nobilis* in Picos de Europa David Sellars pic

The smaller species are very good for the rock garden. They will fit almost any scheme. Once they get established they will sow about and create a glorious early Springtime scenario. There are so many species that the alpinist is truly spoilt for choice. The truly alpine types are typified by their need for drainage and vernal moisture. These will work well with other alpines such as *Gentiana*, *Phlox*, *Colchicum*,

etc. A great number of species have a predilection for the meadow and drainage ditches. These are not likely to fit into your rock garden construction really well unless you can provide a fertile pocket for them.

An extensive study by Rivera et al came out a few years back that really got into the relationships between the various ecological niches that *Narcissus* species occupied. It was entitled, "Iberian *Narcissus* Plant communities Taxa adapted from, "Floriculture, Ornamental and Plant Biotechnology Volume IV ©2006 Global Science Books, UK, Rivera et al. *Floral form in wild daffodils*.

Trumpet daffs are noticeably riparian oriented they state and, as such, would not be good candidates for cultivation in the rock garden unless you have them growing at the base of boulders or in a cleverly constructed swale for example. 55

## **The Do's and Don'ts of Donating seed to the AGCBC seed exchange**

Linda Verbeek, Seed Exchange Reception Coordinator

It is time to think of seeds again. The Seed Exchange is a major activity for the Club, and it depends completely on people sending in seeds. Seed donors therefore get special treatment in two very important ways when it comes to ordering seed from the seed exchange: 1) they get the first chance at seeds that are in short supply; and, 2) they can order more packets than non-donors- 60 packets compared to 30 for non-donors. So why not give be a donor this year? We all grow interesting plants, and it is actually quite fun to hunt for seeds- in your own garden or in the wild.

Some cautionary advice for seed donors: Please ensure that the seed is as free as possible from chaff and that kind of contaminants. Also make sure the seed is dry, and especially if you send it in a plastic baggy. We don't recommend plastic baggies as seed envelopes are much better. We end up throwing away seed every year because it quite often arrives moldy in plastic baggies (sometimes to the extent that it is hard to recognize any seed).

Please make the label easily legible with clear printing. I am sometimes left guessing, and I might guess wrong.

In order to qualify as a donor, you will need to contribute 5 different kinds of seeds and for people in North America, these need to be natives of North or South America. Overseas members get donor credit for seed from any country. That said, we like seed from anywhere, and we do take into account how many kinds of seeds you send, so we certainly hope you'll go beyond the minimum!

Our seed exchange loves wild-collected seed so we ask you to include the following details:

1) the location where you collected it, 2) some details of height, flower colour (if you know it), 3) growing conditions, exposure (sun? shade?). If you are not sure of the species just use the shorthand, sp.

Seed is much more likely to be interesting if it is described as:

Penstemon sp., 20 cm, compact, small lvs, flowers pink, 8000', than if it is described as:

Penstemon sp., and no more.

Once you've packaged the seed and are ready to send it in, it is a great help to us if you could also include an alphabetical list of the seed you are sending. An email of this lists also speeds up the process of collating the entire seedlist at a later date.

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Send seeds to:

**Linda Verbeek,  
5170 Sperling Ave  
Burnaby BC, V5E 2T4, Canada.**

The seed should be mailed in a package labeled: **flower seeds of no commercial value**, and mailed to arrive before 24 October 2015. This gives us barely enough time to complete the seedlist by the time the Fall bulletin is due. If this is impossible, please make sure that I do at least get a list of what you are planning to send by that date. This can be e-mailed to: [beekbos@shaw.ca](mailto:beekbos@shaw.ca) Kindly check your list a second time to make sure that you are actually send what you think you are sending.

Finally- It is important that you send the seed as soon as possible, even if you can't make the deadline. Packaging the seed is another major job and it starts soon after the deadline.

Finally, to end as I started, the donors are the pillars of our exchange- without you there wouldn't be one- so thanks to everyone who'll be sending seeds this year.



the first watering cans were made of terra cotta Italy circa 50 BC

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### Observations of Some Commercially Available *Narcissus* Part 1

Text and pics by Grahame Ware, © copyright by author



## Shrike

*Narcissus* is one of those genera that has universal appeal to the point that we really take them for granted. This is a pity because once you get into growing a good variety over a number of years in different gardens, you're struck by the fact that these plants do a lot of things and do them very well. I dare say they will always be in Top 10 lists. As *Narcissus* becomes more and more difficult to import into Canada and the offerings of Canadian bulb merchants become less extensive, the daff lover has been squeezed at both ends of the choice spectrum. However, it is not an insurmountable clench to to get out of...as you will see.

Daffs, like tulips, are so ubiquitous that any attempt to find really good info seems superfluous, almost a waste of time. But that is the real problem. Does one get any really useful info from the packages or the breathless catalogese of "*Golly gee these are so gorgeous you really, really must try them!*" type of people. I think not.

But don't get down for too long- Ware to the rescue! I have put together some real info for the real gardeners of the AGCBC. A lot of these daffs surveyed are available through **Van Noort Bulbs** (see Endnotes) or Botanus (ditto). Furthermore, you can expect me to have some good daffs on offer in the years to come that likely will *not* 58

be commercially available. Alas, they will only be available in small numbers at AGCBC sales. So many daffs...so little time.

## Format

I have created a format below to distill much of the info. Here is the approach.

This format lists in order firstly (the breeder and the year they registered the cv with the RHS); next, the height (the RHS and ADS put heights into categories.) I find this last one not an entirely useful metric. For example, why call one daff a "Standard" (between 13"-23") and another one "Dwarf" (< 13") when in fact one is 14" and the other is 12 1/2"? Heights vary from season to season along with the availability of nutrients. Thus, it is not a terribly meaningful category.

Next, I list the flowering time then the classification of daff type and this is followed by things that make the daff logically distinct from the others. Daff people call these differences, "divisions". See Endnotes. Next I note any awards. Finally, **Endnotes** at bottom contains additional, info as well as some key references.

## Commercially Available daffs

**Sailboat** (Pannil 1980) Early flowering white dwarf with a real species look. This is not surprising given that the pod parent is *N. jonquilla* and one of the grandparents on the pollen side is *N. cyclamineus*. Captured an AGM in 2006. I think that this is one of the best ones for the container. It is not a root and nutrient hungry thing like so many hybrid daffs therefore a smaller pot will do with Sailboat. It is a real sweetheart that is so adaptable in so many sites in the garden. Long flowering. It has lived in various

containers of mine for years and given great displays in the rock garden. Solid winner. Ahoy rock gardening maties!

**'Tahiti'** (Richardson 1956) An early flowering double although daffodil intel site, *DaffSeek*, (see Endnotes) says its mid-late! It is tall and rain-proof i.e. doesn't flop over with Spring rains. It is not a heavy-headed double being very clean with contrasting deep orange and yellow petals. It has real staying power in the open garden and holds very well in the vase. It is a vigorous and handsome hybrid with good fragrance. One of the few doubles to achieve an AGM (1995) albeit some 40 years after its intro. Winner too of the all important **Wister** (see Endnotes) in 2003. I admire this daff greatly.

Note the side view >> of this double and you'll understand why it doesn't flop like many doubles



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**Misty Glen** has all of the best qualities

**'Gold Cycla'** (Leenen 2006) Dwarf (< 12.8") Early. As the name suggests, this is a hybrid of *cyclamineus*. However, the huge corolla proves to be a physical disadvantage as it cannot stay upright during the inevitable Spring rains with the stem being inadequate to support the flower. In derisive soccer/football terminology, GC is a "flopper". It is a decent performer in the vase but the short stem constrains. Not recommended. Ara listed below and Wisley' are far better *cyclamineus* cvs by far.

**'Misty Glen'** (Board 1976) Descended from a pair of Guy Wilson daffs of the 50's. In fact, ALL of the grandparents were Guy Wilson registered daffs. This gentle Irishman man had an ineffable touch for creating ethereal whites. A dependable early-mid cv with a full, clean look of white with a noticeable green base. Misty Glen is a consistent height and works really well in semi-shady sites. They are unflappable in the winds and rains of Spring. Excellent performer in the vase. When in peak flower, a group of them (properly spaced about 6" apart), look like a choir singing a madrigal. Their heliotropic heads turn and bow slightly to the southwest in its spot in my garden. Beautiful music. AGM 1995; Wister 2010. Many good offspring on the market. Highly recommended. Fertile pollen and seed.

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**Vanilla Peach**



**'Shrike'** (G. Mitsch 1984) Split corona type of the split collar variety. 17" Mid-late according to DaffSeek but flowering here in late March. Not a particularly 'deep' split corona structure nor are the petals very thick compared to some in its class (See 'Vanilla Peach' and 'Mallee' entries below). Holds up well to the rainy weather though possibly because it is so neat and one might say, feminine. Colour and flower presentation is a bit muted for my tastes but that subtlety can sometimes be its strong point. Won an AGM in 2007. Some aficionados feel that it has been eclipsed by better ones in the quickly evolving split coronas category. [See pic at top of article.](#)

**'Vanilla Peach'** (J. Gerritsen and Son 2009) 12"-13" for me but considered a "standard" height by ADS. Mid-season. Split-corona type of the split-cupped collar variety. Thick stalks with two vertical "ribs" for greater strength with wide foliage that rises right up to the flowers. Stands up very well to the rains and winds of Spring. Outer/lower petals are slightly- *very slightly*- larger than the inner petals. Petals are crimped at the centre of the outside/lower trio making for great symmetry and visual force. Amazing corolla frilling enhanced by the contrast of colour- a broad, glistening white and a pinkish canteloupe colour. The inner petaloids are a slightly darker pink as they mature. Wonderful fragrance. One of the best of the split corona class IMO. I'd love it even more if it had a longer stalk thus making it a better cut flower.



**'Mallee'** (Brian Duncan 2001) Mid-season, a tallish Standard with a few of mine eclipsing 29". Split-corona type of the split-cupped collar variety. Heavily infused with the genes (both seed and pollen side) of 'Rose of Trallee' (Richardson pre-1937). Later than all of my other daffs, so I would class this as mid-season-late. The stalks are strong and have definite ribs that add strength, thus it doesn't flop and has excellent posture. The petaloids appear to merge in a flatter display than most split coronas. The flower is highlighted by a striking and zesty, light primrose yellow eyezone. The outer/lower petals are wider than the inner/upper petals and they flare back, while the inner petals are flat. The frilly, split corolla/petaloid dynamic is definitely a very soft pink with some nice highlights in the crinkles as it ages. For me, its a very feminine and refined look unlike some of the more busy and, some would say garrish, split coronas. This is an exceptional show daff with a stately appearance and exceptional staying power in the open garden. In the vase, it stays well for at least a week. Its a must have daff. Several good siblings have been created by Duncan from a daff bred by the late David Sheppard of Mt. Lehman, BC. Wowed in the Wisley Trials with an AGM in 2007. I'm very impressed with our *cover girl's* its beauty and presence.

**White Lion**

'White Lion' (De Graaf pre-1949) Its seed parent is Richardson's seminal 'Mary Copeland'. Mid-late. It is a *standard* height for me (16") but the ADS has it as *tall*- just one more reason to dispense with this '*category*'. This is a deep, thick double with complex corona and petaloid structure- so packed and frilly that it is almost too complex at certain stages in the Spring! It looks especially good when it is an unopened, greeney clot of bud. However, it is a good landscape plant with wide, clean foliage. However, it does have a tendency to lean and flop a little and does not have a long flowering period. Scored an AGM 1993. There are better doubles now.

'Ara' (Leenen 2004) 14"-15" Not dwarf for me as the ADS says but a stout *cyclamineus* cross nonetheless. Mid-season. IMO, a much better *cyclamineus* cross by Leenen than their 'Gold Cycla'. Lovely pleated petals that are very flat and formal. Flowers are "stuck on" straight and they look terrific in a group of a dozen or more. Was making the rounds earlier in its hybrid iteration as 'The Bulb Lady'. So far, no heritage info has come to light. A very, very good daff that has something special going for it.



**Ara**



Ann Jollife giving a seed starting a workshop at Dart's Hill in May D. Sellars pic

**See you at the Fall Plant Sale SEPTEMBER 19th!**

