

NEWSLETTER
THE DAFFODIL SOCIETY
WESSEX GROUP
(Established 1988)

January 2016



With the mildest average December temperature on record, 7.9c, that is 4.1c above the average coupled with one of the wettest it is no surprise that reports of daffodils in bloom were first seen in November. Let's hope there are still some left for the show benches.

The AGM was a resounding success – not often can you say that about AGM's! Many thanks for all who attended and to Carol for sorting out the hall and refreshments.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

This was held on Saturday 24th October once again at Yatton Village Hall, Yatton, Somerset. There was a record attendance of twenty one members and guests attended who travelled from a very wide area. The officials and committee were elected as follows:-

Chairman/Treasurer
Derek Phillips
Vice Chairman
Ray Hayward
Secretary
Basil Billinger
Show Secretary
Gwynne Davies
Committee Members
Caryl Cheeswright
Jackie Petherbridge
Eric Pickard

Ian Penny stood down after many years' service and was thanked for his efforts. Eric Pickard was welcomed on to the committee.

In the event that Gwynne is not able to carry out the show secretary's duties Ted Perren and Keith Boxall offered their services on a joint basis. This was gratefully accepted. Many thanks.

DP and BB gave their respective reports to the meeting that were all agreed.

DP circulated the accounts for the 2014/15 season. A surplus £280 was recorded and he once again highlighted the donation of bulbs by our sponsors. On a national level he mentioned that Gift Aid had now been approved to cover Society Membership fees. Further details in due course.

2015 RAFFLE/BULB AUCTION

Thanks all round to our major bulb sponsors Bramcote Bulbs backed up by Quality Bulbs. Members really dug deep again coerced no doubt by the quality and amount of bulbs on offer.

Again there were some real classy bulbs on order. What an opportunity to pick up half a dozen bulbs with a catalogue price of £150 for a bargain price. Varieties that come to mind were Bramcote Village, Bramcote Sunrise, Chee Dale from Roger Braithwaite and Bears Gold and Kuanton from Ron Scamp.

In total we raised from the raffle and auction the magnificent sum of £462.00.

It is this one fundraising event that helps the group remain financially stable.

Let's hope some of the new varieties will be seen on the local show benches.

2016 SHOW DATES

These are the dates we are aware of at time of publication. This will help in planning your show diaries for the coming season:

Sat 12th March - Burnham on Sea H.S. Somerset (David Bryant 01278 788058)

Sat 19th March - Broadway, Upwey & Dist HS (Eve Morris 01305 813942)

Sat 19th March Yatton & Dist HS (Michael Pitman 01934 838047)

Sunday 20th March - North Somerset C & DS Sunday (G Ford (01761 436913)

Sat 26th March West Moors HS (Sue Hamlett (01202 871536)

Sat 2nd April Nailsea & Dist HS Nailsea, Somerset (Martyn Davis 01278 855563)

Sun 3rd April – Dorset County Spring Show, Dorchester (Ray Hayward 01258 837209)

Sunday 3rd April, Cheltenham HS Pump Rooms, Cheltenham (Barry Stagg 01242 519245)

Sat 9th April - Timsbury HS (Members only) (Keith Pursey 01761 402640)

Sat 9th April Stockwood HS (Members only)

Sun 10th April Daffodil Society – Wessex Group Show, Henton (Gwynne Davies 01202 477978)

Sat/Sun 16-17 April Daffodil Society National Show, Coughton Court – Gillian Griffin 0143 8222040 email dggriffin@hotmail.co.uk

Sat/Sun 23-24 April Daffodil Society Late Show, Henry Street Garden Centre, Reading – Gillian Griffin 0143 8222040 email dggriffin@hotmail.co.uk

We are sure Wessex members will do their best to support the show including the NDS inaugural late show. Will there actually be any blooms I ask?

The Dorchester Show is in its infancy and I know Ray Hayward is looking to build on last year. If you can help please go along. I know Ray will be most welcome to see you.

WEATHER, WEATHER EVERYWHERE

Where would we be without it! This newsletter starts with a comment and I know daffodil growers are wondering what effect it would have on growing habits this season. I posed the question to Derek and here are his views: -

My daffodils starting to grow apace already (mid Dec), but they haven't had the cold spell that they really need to prime them as it were. February is the key month from my own observations. Ideally it would be cold now and very cold in January, which would prime the bulbs for Spring. A mild Feb would then see everything on time for an early and long season of Daffs (so long as it doesn't turn cold again after Feb.) If it is a hard winter and February remains frozen then the early varieties will be late but the late varieties will keep to their time, so a short season. But if this mild spell continues with no winter to speak of, timings will be all over the place (Earlies can be crazy early, lates still waiting for winter cold will not necessarily be early and can cause a gap in the middle of the season). If there is a big freeze right at the end of 'winter' though, growth will be checked and the season will be both short and late. So many variables, I'll let you know what sort of season it's going to be in April !! (I can guarantee it will not be a 'normal' season though, never seen one of those).

It will be interesting what actually comes to pass. You can be sure that members will try their best to overcome any problems. Nothing new there.

HYBRIDISATION

Nailsea member John Hamblin is trying his hand at hybridising and noticed that last year bulbs stressed by being grown in small pots seemed to set seed more readily than those spoiled in larger pots. Should he grow varieties he wanted to hybridise in small pots? He posed the question to Chris Yates who responded as follows.

"Last year I had about a 30% take whereas I normally expect about 75% - so not a vintage year!"

As you say, in nature plants "under stress" are often more inclined to set seed as they think they are going to expire! Personally I have not experienced this phenomena in daffodils. What I have found is that well looked after bulbs produce more and better seed (not necessarily a better take) than those less well looked after. So I wouldn't advocate keeping special "stressed" pots for breeding. If you look after them all, you have the bonus that when a cross doesn't take, at least the bulb harvest is nice & big. Naturally if the cross takes, the bulbs will reduce in size as the plant expends a lot of energy producing seeds.

I am assuming that there hasn't been a significant change in the sorts of things you are trying to cross. I well remember a disastrous year in the early days when I dabbled (dabbed) with lots of Divs 5, 7 & 8 which are very difficult and intimate knowledge of chromosome numbers and gametes etc. is essential.

Divisions 1, 2, 3.6 & 11 (& 4 if you can find pollen & stigma!) are much the easiest.

Having said all of this, there are some cultivars that just don't make good parents. For me those that stand out have been - WHITE STAR, IMPREZZA, CAUSEWAY SUNSET, ALTUN HA, TROPICAL HEAT & MAGICIAN (not all totally hopeless but noticeably worse than most (for me)). TAKE HEART IT IS NOT NECESSARILY YOUR FAULT!!

Keep records of which crosses don't take and if you find a pattern, abandon those cultivars as parents. There's plenty more out there to choose from.

Above all - DONT GIVE UP it is great fun when you do get results (for free!) and when you breed that "Worldbeater....."

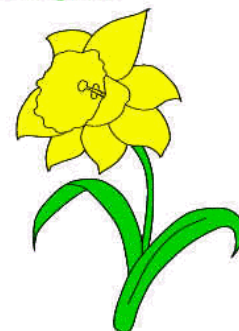
Thanks for that Chris. So there you are. How about having a go

And finally to brighten your day

Daffodowndilly

by A.A. Mine

*She wore her yellow sun-bonnet,
She wore her greenest gown;
She turned to the south wind
And curtsied up and down.
She turned to the sunlight
And shook her yellow head,
And whispered to her neighbour:
"Winter is dead."*



Contributions for future issues are vital for the newsletter to continue. Contributions most welcome please to Basil Billinger on 01275 855675 or email b.c.billinger@talktalk.net

SAD NEWS We have just learnt Rosemary, Dennis Roberts's wife, has recently passed away. Dennis was our main Henton Gardening contact at Henton for many years. Our sympathy goes out to him and the family from all at Wessex.