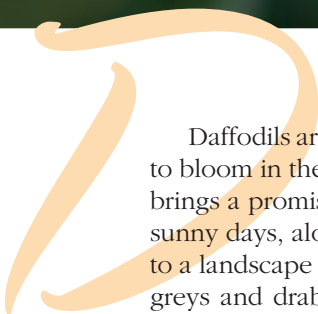




KAL'S KALEIDOSCOPE

I'm weird. Are you? And I get really weird when the first lush hints of spring peek through the last soggy-cold days of winter. The weirdness starts in my fingers, which itch. Then my nose starts to twitch. Why? I'm one of those weird birds that enjoys yard "work." Come spring, I can't wait to crank-up the ol' lawn mower, edge the sidewalk, and start planting flower seeds. I like the feel of dirt under my fingernails as I dig deep into the rich earth. I like the smell of the loamy soil, gritty and wet. I enjoy the wonder of watching something grow, the first green shoots pushing their way upward, sprouting leaves, and then flowering. But one of the first signs of spring has its beginnings in the cool, crisp days of fall.



Daffodils are among the first flowers to bloom in the spring. Their flowering brings a promise of warm weather and sunny days, along with a burst of color to a landscape still dressed in its winter greys and drab browns. A member of the Narcissus family, daffodils originated in the woods of Europe and are easy to grow. In the fall, put a few bulbs to bed under a cool blanket of soil and come spring, *Voila!* They awaken in a brilliant bouquet of golden yellow. How can anyone look at one and not smile? Daffodils often last for weeks on end and make great cut flowers, too. As they stop flowering, allow the plants to grow until they die off. This gives the bulbs time to store energy, which will be needed for next year's growing season.

You may be asking which daffodils grow best in the Deep South? Finding the right variety is important because our winters are short and produce few freezes. Daffodil bulbs like a deep chill to keep them perky and ready for spring. One of the best varieties for a deep south garden is the King Alfred daffodil. Created in the late 1890s by the Englishman John Kendall, this daffodil is a cross between a narcissus hispanicus and a Lent Lilly. The Lent Lilly is perhaps the best known of the wild daffodils that grow through out England. It is also the daffodil immortalized by the English poet, William Wordsworth: "I wandered lonely as a cloud, that floats on high o'er vales and hills. When all at once I saw a crowd, a host, of golden daffodils." This daffodil's name is a good one, because like a real king, it is positively regal. It can grow to twelve inches and its blooms





are quite large.

Other varieties of daffodils can be small, but still pack quite a punch. The Tete-a-Tete daffodil is a golden bowl of color. Each of its stems produces several trumpet-shaped flowers and this variety will easily multiply. The Jetfire daffodil is another good flower for gardens in the Deep South. It grows tall, almost a foot, and has a bright orange color. It blooms later in the spring season and is great for landscaping, as it can be seen from afar. Another variety that is a powerhouse in the garden is the Hawera daffodil. Somewhat delicate, almost orchid-like, this daffodil's thin stems dance with the breeze, filling the air with their pale yellow beauty. Unfortunately, this daffodil won't be found at your local Lowes or Home Depot. It must be ordered, but is well worth the effort. The only daffodil with a true scent is the Thalia. Its sweet smell is augmented by its pale white color, which makes for a good contrast to the golden yellow of other daffodils.

When I was a child, in the woods behind our house were the remains of an old house. Only the brick pillars of its foundation remained. But in the spring, the grounds that surrounded those brick pillars were a lush carpet of golden-yellow. Daffodils, planted by an unknown hand years before, now

grew wild. I could walk to the middle of what had been the front yard and literally swim in a golden sea. Many times I lay on the ground; the smell of pollen and earth filling my senses. When first seeing the movie *Doctor Zhivago*, I was blown away by the scene of an immense field of daffodils blooming under the cerulean-blue sky. It reminded me of those languid sweet days of my childhood spent in a field much like that one filled with golden daffodils.

So, now you know why I'm weird. Are you? If you are, this spring plant something! Watch it grow and await the joy it will bring come summer! And remember, when fall nips the air, don't forget to plant those daffodil bulbs!

Please remember to keep our troops in your prayers. May God bless, and keep a song in your heart.

Kal



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Attention!

Do you have a story about the Gulf Coast? Perhaps it concerns an eccentric aunt who lived in a huge house on Beach Boulevard, or your grandfather, who was a fisherman on the Point. Perhaps its about an old house or store or bar that no longer exists. If you have pictures to enhance your story and think it of interest, please contact Anthony Kalberg - Kal's Kaleidoscope - via his website at www.anthonykalgberg.com.