

Display Garden Ablaze

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needed in the operation so they now hybridize on the 10 acres they have left. The name has also changed from the Daffodil Mart to Brent and Becky Heath's Display Garden.

Now they do a lot of educational things such as Brent's travels to 40 different cities last year speaking to groups about the flower and publishing a book, "Daffodils for American Gardens," written by Becky with photographs by Brent. They are currently working on a book about tulips. Their fields also abound in a blade of tulip colors. "We're trialing bulbs here, new varieties all the time, and we breed new varieties," Brent said.

They provide the following tips on planting daffodil bulbs:

- The best time to plant is in the fall when the ground temperature is at or below 60 degrees F, usually around the date of the first frost or when trees begin to lose their leaves.

- To measure the soil temperature, dig a hole 8 inches deep in your garden area, insert a soil thermometer or a standard room

thermometer upright in the earth and wait five minutes.

- Plant the bulbs at a depth of 6 to 8 inches.

- If it's February or March and you still haven't planted your bulbs, plant them as soon as possible provided that the bulbs are still firm. Flowers from late-planted bulbs, if they don't abort, will bloom later than normal and will have shorter stems, although the bulb will catch up in a year or two.

- Don't expect to store your old bulbs to keep until the following fall. No bulb is engineered to stay out of the ground that long. They will dry out.

Where to plant:

- In the wild, many species Narcissus prefer the sloping habitats of hillsides or mountains, where natural drainage is excellent, because daffodil hybrids include an inheritance of characteristics from species Narcissus, bulbs perform better when planted in elevated areas. If you don't have an elevated area, create berms or raised beds.

- When choosing your garden site, keep in mind that most daf-

fodils prefer full sun, but most will tolerate half shade, whether as filtered light all day long or as hours of shade before or after hours of sunshine. If your garden will be near a shade tree, notice how much sunlight filters through the leaves. There should be at least half a day of sunshine available for your flowers.

- If you have limited time or funds, you can begin a bulb garden as just a small border or edge planting. Expand your border a little more every year.

- The moisture needs of daffodil bulbs are heavy and critical during the spring growing season, virtually nonexistent during summer dormancy, light and steady during fall root initiation, and light throughout the winter.

- The simplest and best bulb fertilizer is good soil rich in humus and other organic matter. Supplemental minerals and nutritional elements, applied periodically, can help keep clumps of bulbs blooming indefinitely.

This year tours were held at the Heath's farm from March 17 to April 15, but by the first week

in April, the daffodils were well over their peak. Brent said El Nino had accounted for the flowers reaching top performance

two weeks ahead of schedule.

To check on the 1999 tour schedule or to set up a private tour contact Becky or Brent at 1-804-693-3966.



The Heaths are considered educators in the bulb-growing world. Becky has written "Daffodils for American Gardens," which includes photographs by Brent. Together they are working on a book about tulips and both are in demand as lecturers. In addition to flower photography, Brent has a weekly gardening television program.

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