

March, 2009
Volume 7, Issue 3

The Green Scene

Save a tree! Send your email address to kackley@iastate.edu to receive this publication via e-mail.



"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;
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze."

- William Wordsworth, "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud"

"I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud" (erroneously known as **"The Daffodils"**) is an 1804 poem inspired by an April 15, 1802 event in which Wordsworth and his sister, Dorothy, came across a "long belt" of daffodils. I hope we all encounter our own spring surprises this month. On March 20th, we celebrate the vernal equinox, when we enjoy an equal number of hours of sunlight and darkness. Of course, it also marks the beginning of spring☺! At last it's time to get out the rake, clean up the clutter and grime left by winter, and enjoy the daffodils that begin poking through the warming soil. This edition of Green Scene has some fun facts about daffodils – and a list of chores we need to "dig" into! Happy gardening! ~ Karen

Did you know? The earliest known reference to Daffodils can be found in the 6th century A.D. writings of Prophet Mohammed.

Daffodils, the flowers symbolizing friendship, are one of the most popular flowers exclusively due to their unmatched beauty. Daffodils belong to the genus [Narcissus](#).

Why Narcissus? According to classical mythology, a young lad Narcissus was so enamored with himself that he stared at his reflection in a pool of water until he eventually turned into his namesake flower. And this is how Narcissus flowers came into being!

Daffodils are constantly recurring flowers with at least 50 species and many hybrids. They are native mainly to the Mediterranean region, in particular to the Iberian Peninsula, as well as Northern Africa and the Middle East.

Kingdom Plantae
Division Magnoliophyta
Class Liliopsida
Order Liliales
Family Amaryllidaceae
Genus Narcissus

All Daffodils have a corona in the center that looks like a trumpet, and a ring of petals all around. The natural Daffodil is golden yellow color all over, while the trumpet may often appear in a contrasting color.



Veggie Gardening 101

Beginning gardeners follow these rules for a successful first year:

- ✓ Pick just 6 or so veggies to grow; that way you won't be overwhelmed with weeds in July and produce in August!
- ✓ For best results choose from tomatoes, peas, carrots, radishes, lettuces, spinach, broccoli, green peppers, green beans, squash and cucumbers.
- ✓ Keep your garden plot less than 100 square feet; plan it out on paper prior to planting. Pick a spot that gets at least 6 hours of full sun every day – and one that's close to the kitchen door for easy access to a quick tomato or two!

March Checklist ✓

- ✓ Start spring cleanup. Take advantage of this month's occasional pleasant days to rake leaves that have accumulated over the winter and to pick up trash and broken limbs.
- ✓ Be careful about working soil in your garden if it's wet. Spading wet soil will make it dry in large hard clumps and ruin the texture of the soil.
- ✓ Begin planting trees and shrubs.
- ✓ Set out pansies as soon as the ground or container is ready. They will flower continuously if the blossoms are kept picked.
- ✓ The best time to plant roses is very early in the spring. Dormant roses will produce a large crop of flowers the first season if carefully planted. Mound earth all over them until growth starts. Gradually remove winter protection from them, but leave the mounded dirt around them until early April. (Also wait until April to plant bare root roses.)
- ✓ Now that the days are getting longer, house plants may be repotted so that they will make good growth during the spring and summer. Also, begin fertilizing your houseplants early this month.

Coming up...

- March 5** – Tree Pruning and Care, Mahaska County Master Gardeners Speakers' Series
- March 8** – Perennial Selection: The New, the Old and the Unusual, Project Green, Iowa City
- March 12** – Growing Rare & Unusual Fruit, Mahaska County Master Gardeners Speakers' Tour
- March 14** – Annual Green Scene Garden Symposium, Waterloo
- March 19** – Lindsay and Lee Zieke Lee, Willowglen Nursery, Mahaska County Master Gardeners' Speakers Tour
- March 20-21** – Iowa Wine Growers Association Annual Conference
- March 26** – Collector's Garden, Mahaska County Master Gardeners' Speakers Tour
- April 3-4, 2009** – All Iowa Horticulture Exposition, Ottumwa
- April 4** – Knoxville Fed Garden Club's 10th Annual Garden Gala.
- April 5** – Good Bugs, Bad Bugs, Project Green, Iowa City
- May 30** – Polk County's One Day Bus Trip
- August 1-2** – Polk County's Two Day Bus Trip

Go to <http://www.extension.iastate.edu/marion/yardgarden.htm> and click on 2009 Upcoming Events on the right side of the web page for more details.

Dandelions or Daylilies?

This is the fun time of year... a time when the weather lets us get out on the occasional nice day and actually work in our gardens - other times when it keeps us in, letting us dream and plan. Do you want to add a new perennial bed? Expand an existing one? Relocate your vegetable garden? Remove a badly damaged tree?

Spring is a busy time for planning and reinvigorating our gardens. There are many facets to this work that may demand more time and energy or experience than you have available to deal with effectively. Why not reduce your burden and enlist the help of an experienced landscape professional? For a list of local businesses, go to <http://www.extension.iastate.edu/marion/yardgarden.htm>, and click on Area Businesses. A less costly approach is to enlist our Marion County Extension Office. We have a wealth of information at our fingertips and access to extremely knowledgeable Master Gardeners who can be recruited for consulting at no charge to you.

Regardless, what you do and plan now will make the difference between dandelions or daylilies later in the year!

Extension programs are available to all without regard to race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age, or disability.