



# Bulb Gardening



News and advice for better gardening.

Newsletter no. 11

## SURVIVING THE DROUGHT

The media and politicians (elections coming up I guess) are whipping themselves into a lather about the latest El Niño event which is causing drought conditions over most of south-eastern Australia. We as gardeners have been suffering water deficits in our gardens for over ten years now and are now getting pretty good at creating beautiful gardens with less water. Drought tolerant Spring flowering bulbs are part of our palette.

### Water wise techniques

**Plant groupings** - Group together plants in the garden that have similar water requirements. For Spring-flowering bulbs plant with other plants that need no summer watering and are winter active. For example cacti and succulents, plants from Mediterranean climates or winter active annuals.

**Plant selections** - Choose appropriate plants for your climate. In winter rainfall - summer drought areas choose plants from Mediterranean climates that are adapted to your climate. This includes many natives and bulbs.

**New plantings** - When planting new plants, do so in Autumn or when you can expect a period of natural rain so that extra watering is not needed during their establishment.

**Mulching** - New and established plantings should be mulched to prevent evaporation of available water and to lower soil temperatures. We favour organic mulches and add extra fertiliser when applying. If done when the soils have had natural rainfall, the mulch will work better.

**Watering** - The most effective way to water your garden is with a deep soaking once a week rather than shallow watering daily. Invest in drip irrigation equipment as the water is applied where it is needed.



Drought tolerant *Allium sphaerocephalon*

## 90 YEARS BULB OFFER



To celebrate the 90th anniversary of our founding we have created a "90 Years Collection" of 90 bulbs.

It will contain 25 *Ranunculus*, 25 grape hyacinths, 3 hyacinths, 5 *Colchicum*, 5 *Nerine*, 5 Dutch iris, 12 *Freesia* and 10 assorted named Daffodils valued at \$3.75 each. A great way to fill in blank spaces in your garden or as a gift for new gardeners. The "90 Years Collection" is \$40 postage paid (a saving of \$40.10).

## HANCOCK'S HISTORY

This coming season our firm, J N Hancock & Co. is celebrating the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its beginnings by its founder Mr. H. A. (Harry) Brown. Harry was born in 1871 and in 1917 he first began breeding daffodils at his property in Ballarat. Before long he was making a great many crosses and selecting hundreds of seedlings. The best of these he named and he registered many with the Royal Horticultural Society in London. When he had enough stock he put them on the market and produced a descriptive

catalogue. Some of his more famous early varieties were 'Malvern Gold', 'Pink Pearl', 'Tecoma', 'Walter J. Smith', 'Marjorie Hine' and 'Sunpool'. In the early 1930s he moved from Ballarat to Camberwell. In 1935 he made a trip to the UK where he



Harry Brown



Norman Hancock

visited famous daffodil growers and was able to bring back new daffodil varieties to use in his breeding program. Around this time he moved to Ferntree Gully where his flower farm was known as "Lyndale Gardens". In 1945 Harry Brown sold the *continued over page....*

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## MITE UPDATE



**Mite damage - note sickle-shaped leaves and twisted flower stem.**

In last years newsletter we mentioned the damage caused by bulb scale mites. As this summer is expected to be a hot one it is wise to repeat preventative actions.

Mite numbers can build up when the bulbs are out of the ground and storage conditions are warm. We have noticed that in particular bulbs grown in pots are the most likely to show symptoms.

### The control

Before planting we have found that a preventative treatment of easily obtained pesticides is useful and also controls other potential diseases. It is a 15 minute dip in a mix of miticide (kelthane, confidor) and a wetting agent (household detergent).

### Hancock's History cont.

business to Mr J.N. (Norman) Hancock and his wife Beryl, who later moved it to their property at Kalorama in the Dandenongs. Beryl Hancock continued the breeding program and became a very successful hybridist. In 1956 Norman Hancock died not long after son Robert had returned from diplomatic duties with the Federal Government to assist his mother.

In 1959 Mr E.H.(Ted) Breen joined the business as a partner and the firm was registered and well known in Australia and overseas as "J.N.Hancock & Co.". Robert Hancock left the business in 1967 and Ted Breen then moved the bulbs to the Breen's family farm at Menzies Creek also in the Dandenongs. His wife Ethel joined him in the business in 1974 when she retired from school-teaching, and continued the breeding program. Rex and Kath Breen joined Rex's parents in the business in 1981 and took over completely in 1984 when they retired.

They pioneered the use of colour in their catalogues and continued the importation of the best garden varieties from around the world and the release of Hancock's breeding.



**Kath & Rex Breen**

In 2000 Christine and Will Ashburner took over the business. Will is a trained Horticulturist and Christine in Botany. She is related on her mothers side to Hugh and Lindsay Dettmann, both very well known Australian daffodil breeders.

## PLANT LABELS

With orders of individual daffodil cultivars from the Daffodil Catalogue you have always received bonus plant labels for marking them. Orders at shows will now receive them too.

Because these bonus labels are so strong and durable we have often been asked where to get them. So that you can mark your other bulbs extra labels are available for purchase with orders.

**10 for \$2.50, 25 for \$4.95**

## GAMBLERS POT-LUCK

At the end of the despatch season (April) we often have small quantities of bulbs packaged up. We offer these bulbs at half-price to people who are happy to take pot-luck.

We make up packages of at least \$70 worth which are available for \$35 post free. The packages generally contain a wide variety of bulbs as well as some daffodils.

To order, simply add to your order;  
**Gamblers Pot Luck \$35**

## DAFFODIL SOCIETIES

Interested in finding out more about growing (and maybe even showing) daffodils or maybe just to chat to like-minded folk? Why not contact your local Daffodil Society for more information.

[www.daffodilbulbs.com.au/vds.html](http://www.daffodilbulbs.com.au/vds.html)

## SHOW DATES 2007

To see our living catalogue display next Spring, please note the following:



### Farm Display at Menzies Creek

25th August - 31st September

### Gardening Australia Expo – NSW

24th - 26th August

### Royal Adelaide Show

7th - 15th September

### Royal Melbourne Show

20th September - 30th September

### Gardening Australia Expo – VIC

5th - 7th October

updates on [www.daffodilbulbs.com.au](http://www.daffodilbulbs.com.au)

## FATHER PIPS DAUGHTER

Our daughter Jessica (aged 14) again exhibited at the Ferny Creek Horticultural Society's Daffodil & Camellia show and her expectations were high. She was keen to win a trophy which is given for collections of 12 stems. She put up two beautiful collections, one of whites and another of divisions 1-3 and came away with the Louis Brumley trophy and the J.N. Hancock memorial trophy.

Her father decided to put up some of his own blooms as he had to wait around for Jessica to stage her flowers. He chose some of his miniature seedlings and was astounded that one of them won grand champion.

Farm & Show visitors would be familiar with Jessica as she helps with our displays on weekends.

Simon (aged 11) is beginning to help around the farm. He is very selective in what he does, the ride on mower is a favourite.



*Winning miniature seedling*