



Bulb Gardening



News and advice for better gardening

Newsletter no. 13

CARING FOR THE FARM

It seems that Governments and economists have finally realised that we are living in a biological system, that there are constraints on growth and that we need to modify our behaviours to be sustainable.

Daffodils have been grown on our farm since 1967. Before that potatoes and peas. We now need a tractor rather than a horse, but what hasn't changed is that everything is done fairly simply and in a low impact way.



Great to see our resident Wallaby, but they do lots of damage to planted seedling trees.

The aim of our whole farm plan is very simple; to leave this farm in an even better state than what we received it in. Subsequent owners have managed that by stabilising the damage done by gold-miners and early settlers who cleared much of the wet sclerophyll forest.

Planning - Developing a farm plan is an important part of being sustainable. It is necessary to consider all physical aspects and how operations interact.

We have identified the parts of the farm we need to maintain for growing daffodils (we have a seven year fallow period between crops), areas of high quality native vegetation which need to be maintained and which areas can be replanted to restore the native vegetation.

Weeds - Much of the Dandenongs is threatened by invasive weed plants whose seed is carried by the wind and birds. We are responsible for making sure that they don't take hold and proliferate on our farm. We are gradually taking control of neglected areas by methodically removing weeds yet still retaining animal habitat.

Re-planting - Our aim is to have 15-20% of the farm vegetated with native plants. Each Winter after the Daffodils are back in the ground we plant trees, shrubs and herbs grown from local seed sources. So far we have planted 1,200 in fenced of areas.



Our first effort at planting, the tallest of these 100 plants is now 8 metres high.

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

Maintenance - It is critical that you don't over reach yourself . The priority is to maintain high quality vegetation in top condition. In the newly replanted areas, keep the wallabies out and control the weeds from smothering them. It takes about 5 years till they are self-maintaining.

Our partners



AUSTRALIAN Government
envirofund



Google for more info;
Johns Hill Landcare Group
Melbourne Water Stream Frontage Program
Land for Wildlife

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SOME DAFFODIL URBAN MYTHS

Urban myths have been around as long as mankind has been. Each year I meet people who truly believe some of the following,

“My Daffodils have reverted to Jonquils”: For starters daffodils are not an “improved” type of jonquil but are in fact a totally different species of *Narcissus* so they can’t revert to a more “primitive” state. Further it would mean that a whole patch, not just one, of identical bulbs changed their genetics, (ie like you suddenly changing your eye colour) to become a jonquil.

What is happening in this situation is that somehow the bulbs have become mixed and the more vigorous jonquils are out competing the daffodils. The size of the daffodil bulbs becomes so reduced that they fail to flower giving the appearance that they are no longer there.



Vigorous jonquil Golden Dawn

“The flowers don’t last long”:

Wrong, daffodil flowers are in fact one of the longest lived flowers. Their life can be reduced severely by hot weather, generally you would expect 2 weeks, but up to 4 weeks for those that open in the middle of Winter. Other plants give the impression of flowering longer but have multiple flowers that replace the ones that die.

Of course by choosing early, mid and late varieties of Daffodils, it is possible to spread your display over at least 3 months, much longer than other plants.

FLOWER PICTURES

Often it is hard to remember what the daffodils you ordered look like. Find out on www.daffseek.org

We have put together another 1,000 pictures of our daffodils which should be on display by Christmas.

“I don’t want tall daffodils because the wind blows them over”: Daffodils falling over is more a symptom of the length of time they have been open. The flowering stem continues to grow after the flower has opened and by the time it fades the stem is often twice the length. Flopping over tends to occur at the end of the flower’s life, if the flower had faded at this point you wouldn’t have thought twice about falling over.



Our very windy hillside

Where we grow our daffodils is on a south facing slope with a direct line of sight to Westernport Bay, extremely windy and rarely do we have a still day. Wind has never caused stems to flop, in extreme occasions break but not flop over.

Often heavy rain will cause the flower stems to flop over but the younger stems will always sit up again the next day if it is fine. Growing daffodils in the shade, however can often make the stems “soft”.

FRIDGE MAGNETS

Each year we send a fridge magnet to all those who ordered in the previous year. It is a facsimile of the previous years front cover. Last season’s daffodil being Apricot Whirl.



Recently it was brought to our attention that our magnets were on fridge in the background of a promo for a new ABC television drama. It seems they are now a must have item for the ABC props department.

2009 SHOW DATES

To see our living display next spring, please note the following dates;



Farm Display (Menzies Creek)

Friday 21st Aug. to Sunday 27th Sep.

Gardening Australia Expo (Sydney)

Friday 28th Aug. to Sunday 30th Aug.

Royal Adelaide Show

Friday 4th Sep. to Saturday 12th Sep.

Royal Melbourne Show

Thursday 17th Sep. to Sunday 27th Sep.

Gardening Australia Expo (Melb.)

Friday 2nd Oct. to Sunday 4th Oct.

FAMILY AFFAIR

Our teenage children occasionally find time in their busy social lives to help. Visitors to our show displays last Spring may have met them. Jessica helped out at shows in Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide. Simon helped at the Farm display and the Royal Melbourne Show. We appreciate their help during this busy time.

This year we had an exchange student staying with us from Germany. Marlen got to see a fair bit of the country going with Christine & Jessica to the shows. She seemed to enjoy the organised chaos of Daffodil flowering time.

Being away in Adelaide, Jessica missed the Ferny Creek Flower Show. Simon exhibited again, winning two trophies and a number of first prizes. Dad entered his beloved hoop petticoats and won that section as well as best seedling, and had one flower considered for best in show.



Jessica and Marlen at the GA Sydney show