

Bulb Gardening

News and advice for better gardening

Newsletter no. 21

2017 OUR CENTENARY YEAR

Hancock's daffodils was founded one hundred years ago when H.A. (Harry) Brown's interest in daffodils led him to make some crosses. "Nothing any good" came at first, but the next year we believe Camberwell Queen and Malvern Gold resulted. Malvern Gold went on to be a significant early cut flower variety in Victoria and was also used in the UK to improve their breeding lines.



A very old field of Malvern Gold

Harry Brown initially grew his bulbs in Ballarat, then Camberwell, Burwood and finally at his property "Lyndale" in Ferntree Gully from 1936.

In 1946 he sold the business to J.N. (Norman) Hancock and his wife Beryl. They continued using the Ferntree Gully property until the mid 1950s, eventually moving the bulbs to a secluded farm on Olinda Creek Road, Olinda. Beryl took over the breeding books from Harry and was as successful in breeding show winning blooms and garden varieties as Harry had been.

In 1959 Ted Breen joined the business and brought with him his skills as a farmer. The 1962 Dandenong fires challenged the business. When the fires threatened Beryl's house in Sassafra, Ted left the farm to help her. When he returned the shed containing that year's harvest of bulbs had caught fire and could not be saved.

When Beryl (and son Robert) retired, Ted Breen and his wife Ethel began running the business. They retained the company name of J.N. Hancock & Co. and moved the bulbs to their family farm in Menzies Creek (where we remain today).

Later Ted and Ethel's son Rex Breen and wife Kath became involved and eventually took over the running of the business. In 2000 the Breens sold the business to Christine and Will Ashburner the current proprietors.



Farm display with the stand used at Melb. Show

In many ways not much has changed over the years as the growing of the bulbs must still follow the natural cycle of seasons, but mechanization, colour catalogues, display gardens and the internet have meant greater productivity but have also thrown up many new challenges.

Published by Christine & Will Ashburner
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Front cover scan of Harry Brown's 1941-42 catalogue from the National Library, Canberra.

Top row - Lord Melbourne, Glenalbyn, Lyndale Beauty

Centre row - Balwyn, Lily Ronalds, Carlisle

Bottom row - Avonlea, Evansford, Dalmore

HISTORIC FRONT COVER

The front cover of this year's centenary catalogue is a reproduction of that published by H.A. Brown. The colour front cover plate is of the fine daffodils that he had bred. This plate was also used on the front cover of The Australian Garden Lover magazine in 1937. The use of colour in those days was very rare.

BREEDING RECORDS

In faded Indian ink, the front cover of a small notebook reads "Daffodil Seed from 1917". This simply titled book was the start of a hundred years of effort to breed better daffodils. Below is the first page in Harry Brown's neat hand recording the crosses that he had executed.



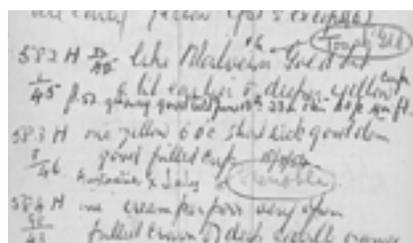
On the right are the results, i.e. those seedlings that had been selected under number.

In the following hundred years seed has been sown from over 7,000 successful crosses resulting in over 15,000 seedlings being selected and numbered for later assessment.

From these selections 1,200 have been named with more to come.

One wonders what Harry Brown would think of the bewildering colours, shapes and forms of daffodils now available, influenced by his efforts.

The page below is from one of Beryl Hancock's seedling books. It gives the selection no. 582H, the seed sown reference 1/45, description and in this case, the ultimate name - Toorak Gold, bred from Malvern Gold.



Gambler's Pot Luck



At the end of the dispatch season in 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 bulbs to the value of at least \$100 worth. These are available for \$56.50 including postage. The packages generally contain a wide variety of bulbs as well as some daffodils.

To order, simply add to your order;

Gambler's Pot-Luck \$56.50

2017 SHOW DATES

To see our living displays next spring, please note the following dates:



Farm Display (Menzies Creek)
Friday 25th Aug. to Sunday 30th Sep.

Royal Adelaide Show
Friday 1st Sep. to Sunday 10th Sep.

Leongatha Daffodil Show
Friday 1st Sep. to Sunday 3rd Sep.

Henty Field Days
Tues 19th Sep. to Thurs 21st Sep.

Baw Baw Garden Expo
Saturday 14th Oct. to Sunday 15th Oct.



Find us on:
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For show and general information on Hancock's.

FAMILY AFFAIRS

Jessica & Simon, our children, have as usual helped us out in many ways through the year.

Jessica continues working part time with a French fertilizer company and has moved into the house next door. For Christmas she went hunting for a dog and now we have a blue & tan kelpie puppy getting underfoot complete with a high-vis coat. Simon is returning to studies at Deakin University where he has enrolled in the Master of Communication course. He lent his skills to evening out the exposures of the photos in the Daffodil Catalogue. We hope you like the improvements made.

We appreciate their help during this busy time, as we do that of our part-time staff who increase their hours and assist us in numerous ways.