

"Why, did you ever.....?!""

Notes on the 2012 WDS Bulb Order by Bob Huesmann

Bulb Order Due May 28!!!

Here's the bulb order commentary for this year. I'd say sorry for the length, but I'm not sorry--from any angle this year's order is quite exceptional. Mary Koonce should be congratulated, especially in view of the fact that it gets more difficult year by year to find good stuff.

My love for plants, especially flowers, and in particular those grown from bulbs was inherited from my grandmother Josephine. When Grandma saw a flower she thought was extraordinarily beautiful she would exclaim, " **Why did you ever...?!**" Well, there are quite a few "**Why did you ever...?!**" included in this year's bulb order, and I'll try to point out as many as I can in the following paragraphs. Looking at the Bulb Order as a whole, several things set it apart.

Treasure Hunt



For example, there are 14 Bulbs of the Year ("BOTY")...several more than usual of these special selections which we regard as standouts among others of their type and are available in sufficient quantities at a reasonable cost. You will also notice a larger number than usual of more recent registrations, including **Happy Retreat**, another new John Reed cultivar being introduced by WDS. (Last year's WDS exclusive from Dr. Reed, Potomac Gold, was a runner-up for best-in-show at Upperville VA and best Youth bloom at our own show this year.) Another first for WDS, there are some excellent varieties from John Gibson, a prominent English grower. Although registered with the RHS, they have not

been available in the U.S. and so are not yet in Daffodils to Show and Grow. Finally, check out the new section of Classics, with excellent examples from each division of these older (1940-69) favorites. Mary's comments on each of the Bulbs of the Year should suffice, but I can't resist adding a few personal observations and updates. The WDS BOTY, **Treasure Hunt**, was the winner of the 2 Y-Y Class at Upperville this year. It is a fine example of what I refer to as the new generation of all-yellow Div 1's and 2's. **Rockne**, in the open list is another. Although not large, its perianth is very smooth and flat, with excellent substance and extra-velvety texture. I also grew **Dambuster** 4 W-Y, having paid a lot more for it last year. It was a good grower, big and impressive, perfectly posed and...NO GREEN. Grandma would have loved it.



Dambuster

Greek Surprise, also from Brian Duncan and listed in Connoisseur's Corner, is another outstanding example in this class. I saw **Dena** for the first time in one of Kathy Welsh's Quinns a few years ago and was hooked, even at a price 4 times its \$13.50 WDS price. The rim looks like it was dipped in cherry juice, and it's a strong grower, frequently seen on the show bench nowadays. I wouldn't be without the intermediate BOTY, **Radjel**. It is neat and very consistent, one of the most useful varieties I grow; it adds piquancy and interest to any collection, perking up the first row of a Throckmorton or Quinn. **Menehay** also grabs the eye when, in good years, the corona is an intense red-orange. **Aberfoyle** 2 Y-YOO is not familiar to me and perhaps not generally in the U.S., but from what I've seen of the 2012 British show reports, it would be a mistake to overlook it. Of the

Gibson cultivars, **Corby Candle** is large and its corona is nearly a trumpet. It has been best-in-show and is a frequent component of winning collections. It's a good grower. **Draycote Water**, too, large. It is sparkling white, with a neat bowl-shaped corona and has also compiled a consistent show record. **Eastbrook**

Beauty, which has been Best Intermediate, is well named. The perianth segments are very broad and overlapping, with a slight and extremely attractive taper toward the mucros. The rather narrow goblet-shaped cup is in beautiful proportion to the perianth. I find intermediates to be useful first- or second -row components in a large collection, and I sure like this one, which has Ulster Bank and Stanway as ancestors. **Finedon Feast** also has broad, smooth petals and a dark orange cup-shaped corona. Of the non-Gibson cultivars listed in this section, **Grand Prospect** is one of my most dependable growers and it blooms early mid-season (not late). **Quiet Waters** is exceptional (see below), and **Ruddynosey** is scarce and much sought-after.

Quiet Waters



Among the Connoisseur bulbs, **All Rounder** is thought by Brian Duncan, its hybridizer, to be perhaps his best and most consistent 3 Y-R. I paid much more for it last year. It opened last week and is truly lovely. The smooth perianth (no center ribs) is light yellow with subtle darker shading, and the cup is dark red, a combination that I find particularly appealing. **Jodie** is another one which was priced for the 1% just a few years ago. It's big, a good grower, has a rare if not unique color code and has made a big impact in shows overseas.



Ruddynosey

Most of the bulbs included in this year's Starter collection are "starters" only in the sense that they would be superb early and long-term additions to any collection. In short, they are "keepers." **Notre Dame**, which I treasure, was the cover picture on the Daffodil

Journal some years ago (how they fly!), and is a late season stalwart. I wish Grandma had been able to see the colors in the corona and the comely shape of the perianth. Its beautiful descendent, **Sacre Coeur**, is in the open list for only \$9.50. The one Karen Cogar showed at Upperville this year was just lovely. This year's "starter" collection is our contribution to austerity--I think just **Inverpolly** and **Notre Dame** are worth the price of the collection.



Notre Dame

If you'd like to update and expand your tazetta collection at a reasonable cost, do it this year. Start with the Trio, two of which are quite recent introductions. We selected these three because they appear to be of show quality and, because they bloom somewhat after Avalanche, should be less likely to freeze and more hardy in our area. (South of here they

should be fine.) My tazettas, including Avalanche, thrive in a bed near the south side of my house. Note that the open list has several additional newer tazetta cultivars, with varying blooming seasons and color combinations. (You have my sympathy if you didn't get Angelique 8 W-GYO last year--it's totally lovely.) I know there's a lot of luck involved, but intrinsic quality surely moves certain cultivars to the Gold Ribbon class. Consider that four of the cultivars in the order have already won gold just this year. In case you might be interested, these are **Cameo Joy** 2 Y-R (order early or weep), **Cedar Hills** 3 W-GYY and **Sheelagh Rowan** 2 W-W (no surprises there) in the open list, and good old **Inverpolly** 2 W-W in the starter collection.

Cedar Hills



Speaking of whites...if you want to beef up or (ugh!) replenish your white collection, this is the year to do it. Besides **Inverpolly** and **Sheelagh Rowan**, note **Quiet Waters** (in the Gibson section). For my money, it's the

loveliest Div 1 white out there, with a proven best-in show record. If you want a more recent introduction, check out **Dust-Up** in the Connoisseur section, Gibson's **Draycote Water** and Ron Scamp's **Orkney** in the open list. Several of the best older white cultivars are in the order this year, too. Among them is **Ashmore** (white collection) which pops up frequently in winning collections and has also won Gold.

Orkney



The Red Cup collection features two very different (one dark, one light) orange perianth cultivars, which are attractive to the public and useful for exhibitors as well. All three red cups are descended from the older and still competitive Ulster Bank. Although all are listed as mid-season, they are really among the last O/R cups to open, a desirable trait in our new climate regime.

When we designate a Bulb of the Year, we have to be sure we can get enough from our suppliers, and at an exceptional price. There are many good varieties that don't meet these practical criteria, of course, and a lot of these wind up on the open list. So, be sure to examine the open list with care. This year, there is an exceptional number of newer cultivars and first-timers in our list. Quite a few have already a good show records and there are others we think will do so. I can't comment on every one, obviously, but here are a few suggestions I hope will be useful.



Nanstallon

The Div 1 Y classes are especially strong and the prices are right. **Goldfinger** ought to be an early acquisition in any collection, useful because it is later than many others in its class. It is Wister-worthy, in my opinion, and is a consistent winner. **Nanstallon** is one of Scamp's best, and **Round Oak** is beginning to establish a show record similar to its sibling, Ombersley. I wish I had space for all of these. The all-white trumpets comprise two of Duncan's recent introductions, **Alpine Winter** and **Lifeline**, and one of Postles' better hybrids, **Castle Howard** (one of my buys this year). strong 2 Y-Y class, I've mentioned **Rockne** above. **Lemon Lyric**, too, rates high for smoothness, texture and substance. It's my favorite of the 90's generation of 2 Y-Y's. **Cape Cornwall** 2 Y-YYO is a frequent winner overseas. If you don't have **Holme Fen** 2 W-Y, get it this year. It sets the standard for the class. I also grow **Irish Affair**, which has impressive size, substance, stem and pose. I'm going to add **Honeybourne** this year. Its honey-colored cup makes it different and it is often shown in winning collections. Another strong section this year is the Div 2 Pink-in-cup class. **Agnes Mace** won the Hybridizer's class at "our own" convention in 2004. **Dailmanach**, old as it is, is still a frequent winner and is among the fundamentals of any collection. **Pin-Up Girl** is healthy, floriferous and consistent. One of mine won its large class at Barco NC this year, and two or three others were parts of winning collections. The price is very reasonable, but quantities are limited, so order early. **Sacre Coeur**, like its parent **Notre Dame**, is a late bloomer. Based on what I've seen this year, I wouldn't be without either one. **Jenna** 3 Y-R stands out among the Div 3 bulbs available because of an accelerating winning record overseas, and it's modestly priced, too. Everybody should grow **Cedar Hills**--but you know that. It's doubly valuable for being a late bloomer. Note also there are three very recent pink-rimmers on the list--all attractively priced. **Orbital Pink**, only \$9.50, was Best-in-show at Belfast in 2011. **Knowing Look** has a very unusual color code (YWP in the cup), and **Toretta** has a striking reddish pink rim.

Even if you have the scarce **Muster** 4 W-O, it would be worth growing **Gay Kybo**. It has won Gold in our region, and predominates overseas, outrunning even Dorchester. **Seagrave** 4 Y-O is new, but is already winning overseas. Its lateness is an advantage. I like the multiple-floret cultivars in Divisions 5, 7, 8 and 12. They are graceful, often fragrant, and they can keep those big Quinns and Throckmortons, usually full of big flat Div 1-3 cultivars, from being totally boring. There are a number of good ones on the order this year. The div 8 section is all new. Div 12's are scarce, but we have three on the list. **Odd Job** has been included in winning collections and

has been best Div 12 overseas. You may have noticed the way WDS divided the Div 9 classes this year into Green-eyed and Other-eyed. There being many fewer Other-eyed cultivars, the two YJR's on the bulb order this year should be very useful to exhibitors. They're both good ones. Among the classic cultivars, one that can really hold its own against modern competition and would therefore be a dandy in any exhibitor's classics collection, is **Estrella**. I saw a real beaut' at the convention last week. It had that lovely, wide but graceful perianth that makes its descendent, La Paloma, so successful. The Intermediate section this year is not long, but the varieties listed are top quality. **Anna Panna** has a very round shape, and the light yellow perianth and intense orange cup attract the eye immediately. **Runkery4** W-P is one of a very few intermediate doubles. **Sarah Markillie** won blue in the Div 11 class in a recent British show.



Odd Job

Biometrics and **Harpsichord**, too, are outstanding intermediates and are strong competitors in the standard classes as well. I'm sorry we haven't been able to establish consistent sources of historicals. Only **Actaea** (also the most recent Wister winner) and another poet, **Cantabile**, appear this year. Regarding Wister varieties, I'm



Cantabile

convinced that there are many cultivars which meet the Wister criteria but for procedural reasons are needlessly excluded from this category. For example, most if not all of the starter and white collections are Wister-worthy, in my opinion, and there are a number of others included in the order. If you crave more, call me and we can find some you will like. This has been a rather long commentary, but justified by the unusual number of outstanding daffodils which would have drawn a "**Why, did you ever..?!**" from Grandma. Personally, I don't need another daffodil, but my own order will be unusually large this year due to the really good things available. I'll just have to be strict in culling what I have--and maybe squeeze a few more into a new space.

In sum, it's a good year to improve your own collection and support our society at the same time. I hope you agree. **Bulb Order Due May 28!!!!**