



Rhododendron & Azalea News **Deer Resistant Plants: *Daffodils!***

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Before I get to daffodils, I must lament the loss of other bulbs I used as companion plants in my garden. For many years I planted accent groupings of tulips and daffodils for touches of color. I always tucked a few bulbs of the early tulip ‘Red Emperor’ in the border. The brilliant red reminds me of ‘Taurus’, a plant that shouts, “spring is here!” After a drab and miserable winter, those bright reds and yellows are like appetizers before a grand feast.

Tulips give an aura of elegance to the garden but I no longer try to raise them because of the deer. As those bulbs send up their growth in the spring, the deer sensed their emergence long before I did. They had already nibbled them to the ground like spears of asparagus before I had a chance to apply some repellent spray. They never had a chance to bloom. When I get a fence, I will try again.

I preferred the later blooming tulip cultivars since they were more likely to flower with my early azaleas and rhododendrons. I liked the stately blossoms of ‘White Emperor’ paired with the soft pink blossoms of Darwin hybrid ‘Pink Impression’. Both of those are tall and bloomed at the same time. I always planted a cluster of elegant lily flowering tulips called ‘White Triumphator’ as an accent beside a large Glenn Dale azalea ‘Dream’. The pointed petals were so artistic. The double pink tulip ‘Angelique’ blooms even later so it made a nice grouping with blue *Phlox divaricata* in foreground of a large blush pink rhododendron, ‘Janet Blair’.

I have admired the tulip display at Butchart Gardens on two ARS Conventions in Victoria, but I am sorry I missed the trip to the famous Keukenhof Gardens in the Netherlands. That was on a pre-tour at the Joint ARS/DRG in Bremen, Germany in 2018. One of these days, I hope to get there to see that spectacular display for myself. For now, I will just have to rely on some YouTube videos.

Keukenhof Garden: the Netherlands

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KEvNenGDLtY> (6:13)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HSEGPaRCFIA> (2:22)

Butchart Gardens: Victoria, BC

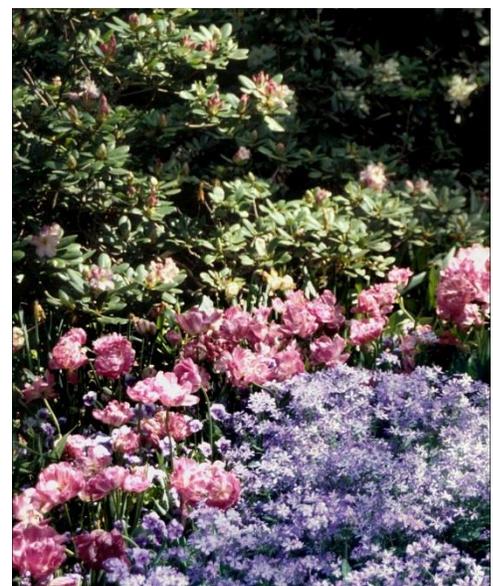
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZgIcITbNnBM> (4:01)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5JbmLiSVcSk> (14:56)



‘Red Emperor’ Tulips and Daffodils



Rhododendron ‘Taurus’



‘Janet Blair’, ‘Angelique’, and Phlox

Dazzled by Daffodils!

I may not be able to raise tulips but I can grow daffodils. Deer don't eat them so every year I try to add a few more. All daffodils are pretty but I have been anxious to try some new varieties. However, it is wise to place orders in early summer. If I wait until planting time in the fall, the best cultivars are often sold out.

Mass plantings like in Keukenhof are dramatic. In a small garden, I still try to find a few places where I can plant a broad sweep of one variety, maybe 50 to 100 daffodil bulbs. Most of the time I only have room for a cluster of 5 to 10 bulbs that will become an accent.

For inspiration, I like to visit Brent and Becky's Bulbs in Gloucester, Virginia. Their display garden is only a few hours away so it is a good place to compare different varieties.



Masses of Daffodils at Brent and Becky's Bulbs



'Fellow's Favorite'

One of my all-time favorites is 'Fellows Favorite', a variety developed by the owner, Brent Heath. The flowers are not large, but the color is a clear, light yellow, slightly lighter in the center. It really stands out and seems to glow in the landscape. It is very reliable and each year the bulbs multiply so the plantings produce more flowers every year. The blossoms seem to last longer than many other varieties, too.

Another good variety for mass plantings is the dwarf 'Tete-a-Tete'. It is very tough and multiplies year after year. The foliage ripens off early so the plants make good companions for perennials that start into growth later in the season. There is little or no problem with competition. The narcissus 'Ice Follies' also multiplies rapidly but the white flowers with cream colored cups don't seem to last as long for me, especially if we get a stretch of hot weather. Its foliage can smother other nearby plants while ripening off, too.



'Fellow's Favorite' at Brent and Becky's Bulbs



Dwarf Daffodil 'Tete-a-Tete'

I like to use small clusters of bulbs as accent groups. Since I have wildflowers in many parts of my garden, I am partial to the more delicately colored daffodils that fit in better with a wild garden. Another all-time favorite is 'Thalia' with its reflexed blooms of pure white. A few of them tucked beside a rhododendron species or in front of a native azalea seem perfectly at home.

I also like the pale yellow 'Avalon' with its delicate white cup. It seems to blend into the wild landscape very well. I have had a few scattered among blue and white forms of our native Blue Bells, *Mertensia virginica*.



'Avalon'



'Thalia'



Glenn Dale 'Dream' and Daffodils

Of course, I do have other places in my garden where I grow brightly colored evergreen azaleas and those areas can handle stronger accents with daffodils in brilliant colors. I do try to select late-blooming daffodil varieties that will bloom with my early rhododendrons and azaleas. In areas of the garden where I have later blooming plants, I can use early blooming daffodils in striking hues without worrying about color clashes. Those daffodils make a statement in early spring but are gone when the subtle rhododendrons open. I do try to keep them away from the more delicate harbingers of spring like hellebores and wildflowers. They would be too dominant! I also learned a "pink daffodil" is not the same hue as a "pink azalea."



'Chromacolor'



'Delibes'



'Gentle Giant'



'Pinza'



'Pink Charm'



'Brackenhurst'

Now is the time to make plans for bulbs you want to plant in the fall. By ordering early, you can get the varieties you want and the mail order companies will ship them at the proper planting time. That is October or November for me.

I have noticed that bulbs planted late in the fall will often have delayed bloom time by a week or more that first spring. That can be handy if your garden will be on a spring tour. It might be possible to have the bulbs bloom during the event. Just be sure to get them planted before the ground freezes.

If you don't order early and varieties are sold out, even the old standards are worthwhile. Daffodils are great to bring indoors or give away. I can always find room for a few more.



'Cheerfulness' (very fragrant)



'Gigantic Star'



'Mount Hood'



'British Gamble'



'Las Vegas'



'Pineapple Prince'



'Bravoure'



'Sentinel'



'Can Can Girl'



'High Society'