

GLEANINGS FROM THE COMPOST HEAP

AUTUMN 2017



WELCOME to the autumn edition of the **COMPOST HEAP**.

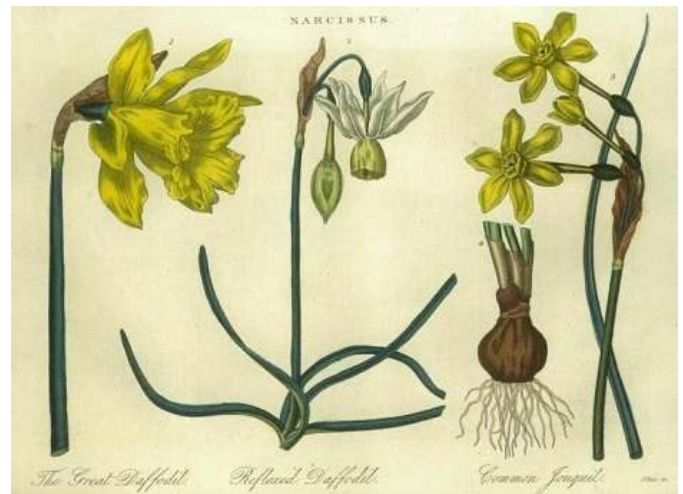
The water saving techniques that I talked about in the last edition haven't been needed much as, according to the Met Office, this summer has been the ninth wettest since records started in 1910. In the Letchworth area rainfall was between 110 and 130% of what would normally be expected and temperature was 0.5 to 1°C higher; it must have been those few days in the middle of June that did it!

DAFFODILS & NARCISSI

It might seem odd to be talking about daffodils and narcissi at this time of year with them being spring flowers, but the beginning of October is the ideal time to plant them. So, what is the difference between a daffodil and a narcissus? Well, I would say, that if the height of the centre part of the flower is greater than its diameter then it's a daffodil otherwise it's a narcissus. Actually there is no difference, narcissus is the Latin or botanical name of the genus and daffodil is simply the common or popular name. Let's use the common name from now on.



Origins and History - A member of the amaryllis family, the daffodil is native to southern Europe and North Africa and is thought to have been cultivated from the earliest times. Its popularity began to increase in Europe from the end of the c16 reaching a peak in the late c19; it was at this time that The Daffodil Society was formed.

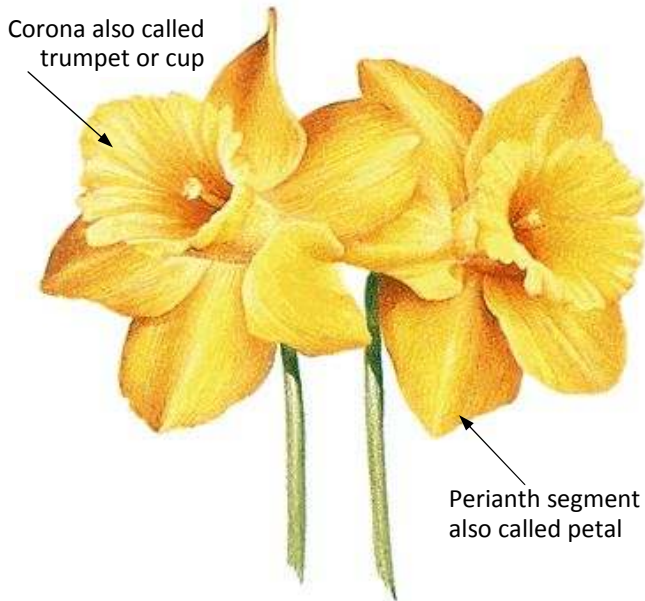


The name daffodil is derived from affodell, a variant of asphodel which is another plant. Though not related, the narcissus was often referred to as the asphodel. It is believed that the initial d comes from merging with the definite article in Dutch ie. de affodil, the Netherlands being an early source of bulbs. The name narcissus is derived from a Greek word which means "to numb" or "intoxicate" in reference to the narcotic properties of the plant, not the character from Greek mythology as is sometimes thought.

Varieties & Classification - How many varieties of daffodil do you think there are? A couple of hundred? A couple of thousand? No, as of 2008 there were

more than 27000 registered varieties and counting, so after another 9 years there will undoubtedly be many more. They are grouped into 13 divisions generally based on the form of the flowers.

The outer part of the flower is made up of 6 perianth segments more commonly called petals. The centre part is the corona more commonly called a cup when its diameter exceeds its length and a trumpet when its length exceeds its diameter.



Planting and Growing - Once you have chosen your bulbs you must decide where to plant them, in sun or light shade is best. Aim for at least half a day's sun if possible.

Planting in borders - the more bulbs that are grouped together, the better the display. Typically, 25 to 50 bulbs may be needed to make an impressive show but aim for at least six in a group. Using a garden trowel make a hole that is three times deeper than the height of your bulb. Place the bulb in the hole with the shoot or 'nose' facing upwards. Replace the soil and firm gently but avoid treading on the soil. Plant the remaining bulbs in the group leaving at least two bulb widths between them.

Planting in lawns (naturalising) - scatter the bulbs randomly over the chosen area, adjust any that are touching or too close together, then plant them where they lie using a garden trowel or bulb planter as described for borders.



Break up some of the soil from the plug of turf removed and use this to fill around the bulb. Replace the turf on the top of the hole so that it is level with the surrounding lawn surface.

Planting in containers - choose a pot that is big enough to accommodate at least six bulbs, remembering you need only leave one bulb width between them, and deep enough to allow a planting depth three times the height of the bulb with 10cm (4") of multi-purpose compost beneath. For long term displays use a loam-based compost rather than multi-purpose.

Watering and feeding - never let the bulbs dry out and continue to water for six weeks after flowering. For borders, apply a general-purpose fertiliser in late February to encourage bulbs to flower well the following season. For containers, use a liquid high-potassium feed, such as tomato fertiliser, from early spring until six weeks after flowering.

Dead-heading - cut back spent flowers to the base of the flower stalk. This will prevent the plant spending energy on seed production, conserving resources in the bulb for next year.

Cutting back - after flowering, do not tie or knot the foliage but leave at least six weeks before cutting back or mowing in naturalised areas. Ideally only remove foliage when it is yellow and straw-like.

Daffodils at the Trading Store - At the Trading Store this autumn we are stocking daffodil bulbs for the first time. To promote this we are holding a '**Daffodil Day**' on October 1st where we will have 2 varieties available:



Tête-à-Tête: from division 12 (some say 6); this dwarf daffodil grows to 20cm (8") tall. It has clusters of up to three deep golden-yellow flowers with slightly reflexed petals and deep yellow trumpets which appear in March and April above the narrow, strap-shaped leaves. One of the most popular forms and great in pots.

Cheerfulness: from division 4, this double daffodil grows to 40cm (16") tall. It has clusters of scented white flowers with cream and yellow segments in the centre which flower in late spring and are said to resemble carnations.



Both will be priced at £1.08 for 10 bulbs, a saving of 10% on the usual price. In addition to this a number of other items will be on sale including all remaining Dobies seeds at £0.50 a packet. There will also be free coffee and croissants for everyone as well, while stocks last.

COMING SOON

Sunday 1st October 9am to 12noon

'Daffodil Day' at the Trading Store

See previous column for full details.

Wednesday 4th October at 10am

Today and every first Wednesday of the month - Coffee Morning at Tapps

Thursday 19th October at 7:45pm

'A taste of Capel Manor' by Anne Luder

Anne, garden designer and former lecturer at Capel Manor College visits to tell us a little bit about the history of Capel Manor as well as some of her favourite gardens and anecdotes.

Wednesday 1st November at 10am

Coffee Morning at Tapps

Thursday 16th November at 7:45pm

'A year in our garden' by Sherie Plumb, prize winning vegetable grower.

Thursday 18th January 2018 at 7pm

Our second 'Sausage Sizzle Social'

Sausage 'n' mash and apple crumble. Get your tickets from the Trading Store or whenever you see us at meetings, coffee mornings etc., £5 per person.



For more information, please contact our Meetings Organiser on 01462 621961 or email meetings@ldga.org.uk

TRADING STORE NEWS

Strulch - In July we began stocking Strulch at the Trading Store. Strulch? What's Strulch? Well, it's wheat straw which has been specially processed to be a biodegradable mulch that has been verified for organic growing. We are the only stockist within 15 miles and our Strulch comes in 150l bags at a cost £9.00. Call in to find out more.



Kings Seeds - From now on our preferred seed supplier will be Kings Seeds of Kelvedon. We believe Kings offer a better range and quality of seeds. The informative and colourful packets will give members better instructions for planting the seeds and they will also help improve the look of the Store.

Paying by card - We are currently putting in place a system which will allow us to accept credit and debit cards. We will be doing trials and staff training in the



next few weeks with the view to having it fully operational for the start of next year. Please continue to bring cheque books and cash until then.

Refurbishments - If you have been up to the Trading Store lately you will have seen vast improvements as a result of our ongoing maintenance program. The double door has been repaired and painted and has new metal kick plates. All 175sqm of the internal walls have been pointed and painted with two coats, and a new draught screen has been fitted next to the till desk. The lights and roof area

have been cleaned and wires put up for new improved signage.



The two rotten windows at the far end have been bricked up for extra security. The compound has been cleared of all rubbish including old pallets, scrap wood, scrap metal and old flower pots; trees have been cut back.

Two cut-down shipping containers have been ordered for the compound. This will allow us to keep all items such as the gazebo, show equipment etc. out of the Store thus allowing more room for us to expand our future range. We will also be able to hold more backup stock of your favourite items so we don't run out half way through the season.

The next task will be to move all the items that need to go into the containers. This will then allow us to reconfigure and refurbish the racking.

A big *Thank You* to John Brookbanks for all his hard work making it all happen.



COACH OUTINGS

Places are still available for our coach outing to see the 'Winter Lights' display at Anglesey Abbey on **Friday 24th November**. Hurry though, as we will be offering them to a wider audience before too long.



The 1.2 mile path through the garden is cleverly illuminated with coloured lights and you'll also be able to enjoy a shadow theatre and glow performers.

We leave Letchworth from outside the former Plinston Hall at 4:45pm* and arrive back at approx. 9:00pm. LDGA members £33, non-members £36. This includes admission, coach and a light meal - the menu choices are:

- Meat hotpot with tea or coffee
- Vegetable hotpot with tea or coffee
- Pulled pork sandwich with mulled wine or hot chocolate

For more information or to book a seat, please contact Myra on 01462 621961 or email outings@ldga.org.uk

*start time is an hour earlier than previously stated.

PRODUCE SHOWS

Thank you to Show Secretary Paul Heydon and everyone who helped to prepare for and put on this year's shows.

One of the highlights at the Summer Show was the entries from Northfields School Gardening Club.

Here is their display of produce grown in the school garden depicting the life cycle of the butterfly, with the eggs, caterpillars and chrysalis on the left, then the butterfly itself.



Can you spot the following items in this oversized football boot collage that they made?

- Badminton racket & shuttlecock
- Cricket bat & ball
- A pair of cyclists
- Football & stop watch
- Golf clubs
- Gymnasts with ribbons
- Runners with Nike & Adidas vests
- A pair of swimmers
- Tennis racket & balls



ISAY I SAY I SAY

Q. - What do you get if you divide the circumference of a pumpkin by its diameter?

A. - Pumpkin pi.



RECIPE – PUMPKIN PIE



If you are making pumpkin lanterns this Halloween don't throw away the hollowed-out flesh, make a pumpkin pie with it instead.

Ingredients

2 sweet short crust pastry cases 20cm (8") diameter and 2cm ($\frac{3}{4}$ ") deep

600g peeled and deseeded pumpkin flesh, cut into 2.5cm (1") chunks

3 large eggs

275ml double cream

100g soft dark brown sugar

$\frac{1}{2}$ level tsp ground cinnamon

$\frac{1}{2}$ level tsp ground nutmeg

$\frac{1}{2}$ level tsp ground allspice

$\frac{1}{2}$ level tsp ground cloves

$\frac{1}{2}$ level tsp ground ginger

If your spices have been in the store cupboard for a few years they may have lost some of their potency so don't be afraid to add a little extra

Method

Pre-heat the oven to 200°C/400°F/Gas 6.

Place the pumpkin chunks on a baking tray, cover with foil and roast for 20-30 minutes until tender. Press the cooked pumpkin in a coarse sieve to extract any excess water then set aside to cool before blending in a food processor to make a purée.

Lightly whisk the eggs in a large bowl.

Place the sugar, spices and cream in a pan; bring to simmering point, stirring as you go. Pour the mixture over the eggs and stir again. Now add the pumpkin purée, still stirring to combine everything thoroughly.

Reduce the oven temperature to 180°C/350°F/Gas 4.

Pour the filling into your pastry cases and bake for 35-40 minutes, by which time it will puff up round the edges but still feel slightly wobbly in the centre.

Remove the pies from the oven and place on a wire cooling rack. Serve warm or chilled with some crème fraîche or whipped cream.

Store in the fridge loosely covered in foil.

There should be enough filling to fill 2 of these shallow cases so you can eat one straight away and freeze the second one to have later!

I've suggested using a ready-made pastry case but you could buy the pastry and roll it out or you could make your own from scratch. If you have got squashes, butternut for instance, they work just as well.

JOBS FOR AUTUMN

Here are half a dozen jobs you can tackle during the autumn (courtesy of the RHS).

October

- At start of the month, plant daffodil bulbs for an early spring display
- Collect fallen leaves to make leaf mould

November

- Plant tulip bulbs to follow on from the daffodils
- Raise containers onto pot feet to prevent water logging

December

- Take hardwood cuttings from flowering shrubs such as buddleia, forsythia, philadelphus and roses
- Sit by the fire and start planning for the next year!

HORTICULTURAL HISTORIES

The Hand Trowel – Trowel-like tools have been around since the Neolithic Age, when people used the shoulder blades of large animals, such as oxen, to work the soil. They also produced small, sharp stone blades set into bone handles which were used for the domestication of plants.



During the Bronze Age people created the process of smelting, enabling them to create sharper & harder tools made from metal but still nothing resembling the modern day trowel. In the mid c17 the demand for specialised gardening tools, such as the hand trowel, began to emerge with the world-wide interest in gardening but it was still really just a small spade.

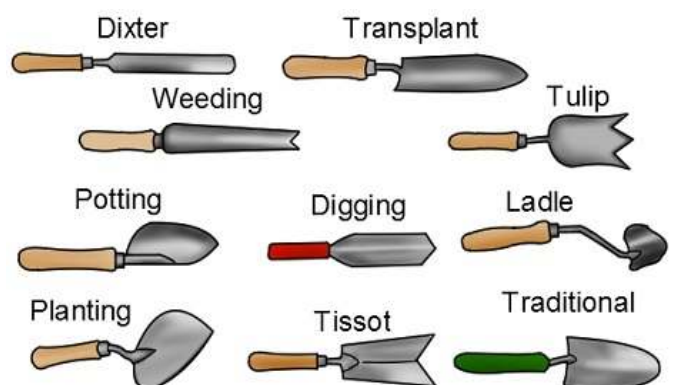


The trowel as we know it, which derives its name from the Latin 'trulla' meaning small ladle or scoop, came to prominence in the mid c19 when it was sold as a ladies' gardening implement; before that gardening was something done almost exclusively by men. Since then the garden trowel has evolved into its own unique tool with a wide range of different varieties and constructions.



The cheap pressed steel versions can buckle under anything but the lightest pressure, so for me, stainless steel is best with a sturdy forged tang and ash handle - almost indestructible. Modern day trowels can have soft rubbery and brightly coloured grips with handles that are curved or at 90 degrees. This ergonomic design is intended to help gardeners with weak wrists.

Hand trowels can be used for planting seedlings, transplanting, weeding and digging holes which are too small for a spade. So how many trowels does a gardener really need? I don't know, but there seems to be a separate one for every job, 10 in all:



When using the traditional trowel it is intended to be pushed in vertically and pulled towards you not flicked away. Its component parts are very handy for setting out, with its overall length of 30cm (12"), a blade of 15cm (6") and handle of 10cm (4"). The engraved graduations on some trowels help judge planting depth.

AUTUMN WORD SEARCH

N R P Y R A C A N T H A S N K A
 A F A N N T C H E S T N U T K F
 H T H E E O H C C N A F E I O G
 A S A E F S A A Y Y U T Y Y N A
 L W O C H R Y S A N T H S T N Y
 L T E S Q U A S H A C H H S N T
 O C A U T H Y S A N O A S E F S
 W N E G N A R O N T N C C V E I
 E R S T A L N A I C K E N A Y M
 E O R S T A R S K E E R E E T O
 N C H H E S O A P T R A R L S S
 H A C E I P N M M R S L I C O Q
 S A N T K O R E U A O I N S R M
 Y S N C R T E A P N A I E O F T
 H T E T R T T E K S N S T C A T
 U T R N N H R T S E C T R G N K

- | | | |
|---------------|-------------|--------------|
| ▪ ACER | ▪ FROSTY | ▪ ORANGE |
| ▪ ACORN | ▪ HALLOWEEN | ▪ PUMPKIN |
| ▪ CHESTNUT | ▪ LEAVES | ▪ PYRACANTHA |
| ▪ CHRYSANTHUS | ▪ MISTY | ▪ RAKE |
| ▪ CONKERS | ▪ NERINE | ▪ SQUASH |

Find these autumn-related words hidden in the grid: they can be backwards, forwards, up, down or diagonal.

QUIZ TIME

What are the alternative names for these common garden flowers? Easy starter!

- Daffodil
- Red Hot Poker
- Sweet Pea
- Honesty
- Forget-me-not
- Snowdrop
- Agapanthus
- Alstromeria
- Dianthus
- Gypsophila
- Nerine
- Pulmonaria

a) Narcissus; b) Kniphofia c) Lathyrus; d) Lunaria; e) Myosotis; f) Galanthus; g) African Lily; h) Peruvian Lily; i) Carnation; j) Baby's Breath; k) Guernsey Lily; l) Lungwort

AND FINALLY...

Continuing the daffodil theme, here's the original first verse from that famous poem by Wordsworth to inspire you.

*I wandered lonely as a Cloud
 That floats on high o'er Vales and Hills,
 When all at once I saw a crowd
 A host of dancing Daffodils;
 Along the Lake, beneath the trees,
 Ten thousand dancing in the breeze.*

William Wordsworth (1804 version)

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www.ldga.org.uk

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Promoting horticulture since 1906