

Narcissi of the Section Pseudonarcissus

by A. W. TAYLOR

INTEREST IN DAFFODILS began early in England. Popular affection for their flowers is shown in the writings of Clusius, who, at the end of the 16th century records that *N. pseudonarcissus*, our Lenten Lily, grew abundantly in fields near London, and that the flowers were sold in springtime in Cheapside for the decorating of shops and taverns. At the same period, and even earlier, new daffodils began to be introduced from their main centre, the Pyrenees and the Iberian Peninsula. The great growth of interest in these plants is shown in the writings of the early botanists of the 16th and 17th centuries, Clusius, Gerard, Sweet, Bauhin, Parkinson and many others.

It is remarkable that so many Pyrenean species of *Narcissus* were obtained at a time when the high Pyrenees must have been extremely difficult of access, though perhaps the much-travelled pilgrim ways from Europe across the Pyrenees to Compostela at that time may explain it.

As the horticulturalists became busy with the introduced species, and forms derived from them, interest in the naturally-occurring species tended to wane. It was late in the 18th century that much fresh botanical work on *Narcissus* commenced. First Salisbury and then Haworth introduced elaborate classifications with a great multiplication of varieties, species, and even genera, which later were drastically pruned, first by Herbert and then by Baker.

By far the best modern review of *Narcissus* subgenus *Ajax* (the trumpet daffodils) is the monograph by H. W. Pugsley, who adopts a middle course between the "lumpers" and the "splitters", and gives most carefully reasoned and fully documented arguments for his conclusions.

Finally, Dr. Fernandes of Coimbra University, Portugal, at present the leading authority on the genus, has published *Keys to the Identification of Native and Naturalised Taxa of the Genus Narcissus* (1968)* in which most of Pugsley's species remain, though the subgenus *Ajax* (survival from Salisbury's classification), is dropped, and its trumpet daffodils are now Fernandes' Section 11 *Pseudonarcissus* of the genus *Narcissus*.

* Available from the Royal Horticultural Society, Vincent Square, London, S.W.1. Price 4/-.

GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION AND HABITAT

Narcissi of the *Pseudonarcissus* Section have a quite restricted distribution, being, to a great extent, centred on the mountains of Northern Spain and, particularly, on the Pyrenees. It is true that there are isolated records of various species of the Section from localities far from their main centres, but in all such cases the suspicion must arise that they had been introduced at some earlier date, and thereafter persisted as naturalised forms. No one who has been so fortunate as to see daffodils of the *Pseudonarcissus* Section in their vast numbers, colouring whole mountainsides and valleys in the high Pyrenees, with their colour varying from deepest gold to palest yellow, can doubt that in these mountains is their true home.

Some species, such as the dwarf *N. asturiensis* are centred on the Spanish and Portuguese mountains of the far N.W. of the Peninsula, while *N. pseudonarcissus* has the widest distribution of any species of the Section, ranging from Spain through N.W. Europe as far as the Rhine to the east, including England to the north, and Northern Italy to the south. With the exception of *N. pseudonarcissus*, all other daffodils of the Section *Pseudonarcissus* are true mountain lovers, though their altitudinal range is wide in the case of some species, while others are only found at moderately high altitudes. *N. pseudonarcissus* alone does not seem to be primarily a mountain plant: it is, over most of its very wide range, a lowlander, flourishing on the plains or on low hills, such as those in the border country of Herefordshire and Shropshire in England, but seldom aspiring to the true mountains. It is seen in the Pyrenean foothills, the lower Maritime Alps and the Dauphiné, and there are records, some doubtful, of its occurring up to 2000 m. in the Alps and the Pyrenees.

At both eastern and western ends of the Pyrenees, various members of the mountain daffodils spill over onto the lowlands: at the western end to the sandy Landes, and at the eastern to the low limestone hills of the Corbieres, between Perpignan and Narbonne.

N. pseudonarcissus is often a woodland plant, but all the other species of the Section favour open mountain slopes, upland meadows, and valley floors, though some species do extend up to the screes and cliffs of the high peaks. Sometimes groups of these daffodils may be found growing at the edges of open forest, often conifer forest, but this is not their usual habitat; and in such positions, in semi-shade, their normal habit of growth is modified.

Several of the mountain species seem to tolerate a wide range of soils, though some of the finest and most extensive areas of daffodils are often found on granite formations. Water content and drainage of the soil seems of rather minor importance, for we have found the same species of daffodil growing with equal ease and equal beauty both in a high water meadow under bog conditions, and also in the dry crevices of high rock outcrops.

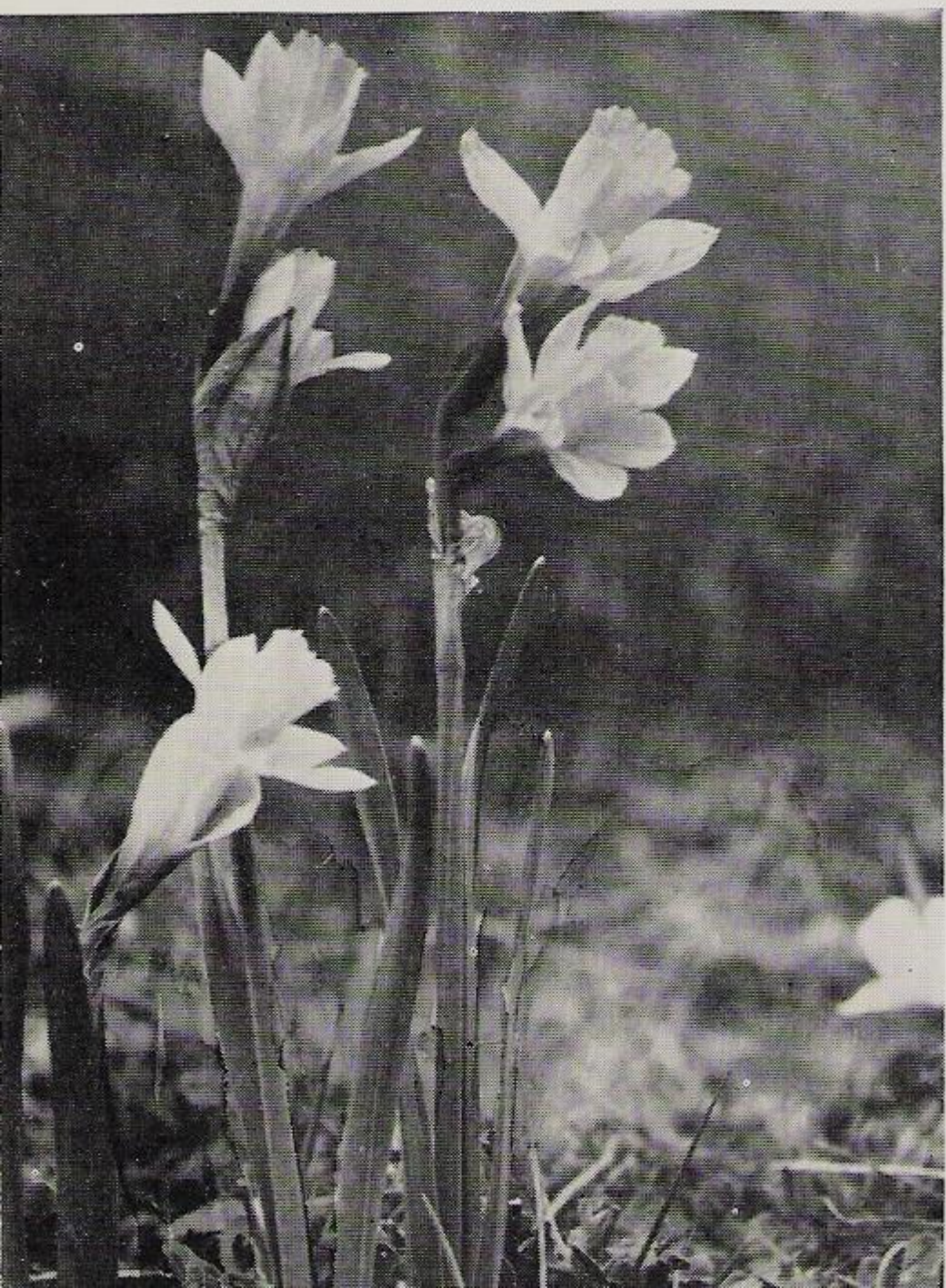


Narcissus pallidiflorus (p. 104)



Narcissus alpestris (p. 107)

Narcissus nevadensis (p. 103)



Narcissus abscissus (p. 106)



NARCISSI OF THE SECTION PSEUDONARCISSUS

The flowering period of these daffodils varies with the species, and is often of help in separating closely related species and varieties. In the Central Pyrenees, for example, the flowering season begins with *N. abscissus* in mid-April, and concludes with *N. nobilis* in mid-June. During this period successive waves of flowers of the various species succeed each other, and by the time *N. nobilis* takes over the scene, there is little left of the species that preceded it.

THE IMPORTANT TAXONOMIC FEATURES IN THE SECTION PSEUDONARCISSUS

To the non-specialist plant lover who is fortunate enough to be in the Pyrenees during the period April—June, the daffodils of these mountains will provide both a delight and a puzzle. The delight of seeing these lovely flowers in full glory in their Pyrenean setting is obvious; it is only when attempts at identification begin that bewilderment grows. It must be realised at once that when, as is sometimes the case, more than one species of *Narcissus* is flowering at the same time, natural hybridisation is extremely common, and that a wide range of natural hybrids may be, and probably will be, encountered. It is necessary, both for identification of the species and for a study of the natural hybrids, to have some basic knowledge of the diagnostic points on which separation can be made.

The bulb is of little help, except sometimes, as with *N. bicolor*, when it is of exceptionally large size.

The leaves are of more help. The width is of importance, and, to a lesser extent, the arrangement: spreading, erect, or twisted.

The pedicel (that portion of stem between origin of spathe and the ovary), is important; it may be slightly or strongly curved, leading to the flower being sub-erect or drooping: or the whole pedicel may be abruptly flexed, without itself being curved. The length of the pedicel is also most important.

The flower itself is, however, of prime importance. Size, colour, shape and arrangement of the perianth segments, with the length and colour of the perianth tube; colour and shape of the corona (trumpet), with marginal expansion, reflexion lobing indentation, all being highly important features.

Some features of the stamens may be important in differentiation, and here a lens will be a help.

We have found Pugsley's monograph of *Narcissus*, subgenus *Ajax*, and Bowles' text book on the *Narcissus* to be both fascinating and indispensable.

In the account of the species which follows, the nomenclature of the 1968 key to the genus by Fernandes will be adopted.

SECTION PSEUDONARCISSUS

Series Lutei. (YELLOW TRUMPET DAFFODILS.) FLOWERS DEEP YELLOW, MORE OR LESS CONCOLOROUS; PEDICEL NOT DEFLEXED.

Narcissus longispathus Pugsley.

This rare daffodil grows in Andalusia, where it seems to be confined to the Sierra de Cazorla in Jaen Province, home of other rare plants, and not very easily accessible even today. It is a tall species, with leaves 40—60 cm. long, and disproportionately small flowers, similar in form and colour to those of the Tenby Daffodil, carried on erect pedicels which, like the spathe, are typically elongated, varying from 4—9 cm. in length.

Narcissus obvallaris Salisb.

The Tenby Daffodil. A very beautiful concolorous species, short in stature, being only 20—30 cm. high, with its pedicel 10—25 mm. long, and slightly curved; the rich golden flowers are of moderate size, the perianth segments being broad, imbricated and spreading: the corona broad, spreading and marginally lobed.

Bowles regarded *N. obvallaris* as the most perfect in proportion and texture of any of the deep yellow trumpet daffodils. Its origin is quite obscure. As its popular name implies, this daffodil has for long grown wild near Tenby, and in earlier times was recorded as growing in other parts of Pembrokeshire, and also in Oxfordshire. Similar daffodils, sometimes described as forms of *N. obvallaris*, or even as related species, have been recorded from Holland, North Italy, and Austria; it seems unlikely that they are truly indigenous in these areas.

Whether *N. obvallaris* is a true British native, or naturalised, is doubtful. There is no record of its introduction from Spain, but this cannot be excluded, particularly in view of the existence of other Spanish daffodils of the yellow trumpet series, some of which show similarities to the Tenby Daffodil.

Narcissus hispanicus Gouan.

This very large handsome deep golden daffodil has been much admired and much sought after since the 16th century. Parkinson, in a good description of the species calls it *Pseudonarcissus aureus Hispanicus maximus*. It grows to a height of up to 90 cm., being the largest of the Spanish daffodils, and carries its 45—65 mm. long flowers on erect pedicels, 25—35 mm. in length, and slightly curved above. The leaves are more or less spirally twisted. The perianth segments are oblong-lanceolate, slightly imbricated and spreading, while the corona is abruptly dilated and widely spreading, with deeply crenate-dentate margin.

NARCISSI OF THE SECTION PSEUDONARCISSUS

N. hispanicus is so handsome that it has been much collected since very early times, and has been recorded from various stations in the North of Spain and in the Pyrenees, though not recently. It is said by Salisbury to have occurred in the Cevennes, although Rouy regards it as only naturalised in France. Clusius records it as growing in meadows in Old Castile, and Wilkomm and Lange state that it grows in Old Castile and Granada. In these records it seems probable that there has been some confusion with the similar but smaller species, *N. confusus*.

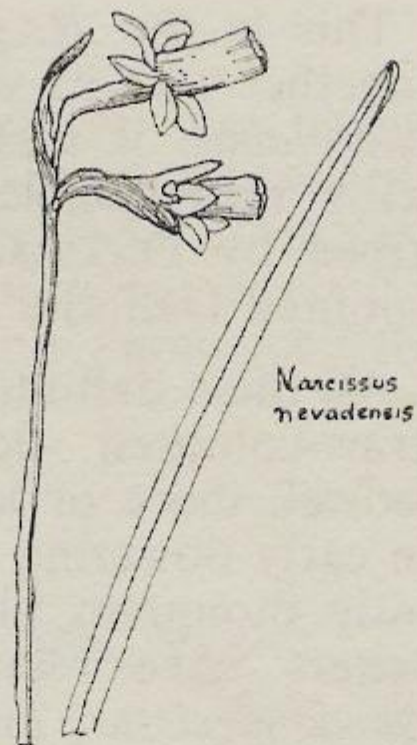
Varieties of *N. hispanicus*, differing from the species in minor features, have been described under the names of var. *propinquus*, var. *spurius*, and var. *concolor*.

Narcissus confusus Pugsley

This species is closely related to *N. hispanicus*, but differs in its smaller size, broader leaves, and less lobed corona. It is stated by Pugsley to be the prevalent daffodil of Central Spain. There is an interesting suggestion that this species is the origin of the common double daffodil of gardens.

Narcissus nevadensis Pugsley (illustration p. 100)

This daffodil grows to a height of 20—35 cm. The spathe, up to 50 mm., and the pedicel up to 28 mm., are both very long, and the rather small sub-erect flowers are bicoloured with a golden corona and very pale yellow perianth segments. It is a rare daffodil, the only species from the Sierra Nevada, and was first collected by Mr. Lofthouse in 1931 at about 2000 m. The usual inclusion of this bicoloured daffodil in the series *Lutei* seems difficult to justify.



Series Vulgares FLOWERS YELLOW, CREAM OR STRAW COLOURED: CONCOLOROUS OR MORE OR LESS BI-COLOURED. PEDICEL SHORT AND DEFLEXED

Narcissus pseudonarcissus Linn

The Lenten Lily of English meadows and woodlands, with a very wide distribution throughout Western Europe, and showing much variation even in a single locality. Many of these morphological variations have been given varietal or even specific names at different times, but Fernandes only lists six varieties.

The typical *N. pseudonarcissus* has small bulbs, glaucous erect leaves 12—35 cm. long, scape 20—35 cm. long, with pedicel very short (3—10 mm.) slender and strongly deflexed. The flower, of medium size (about 45 mm. long) is usually drooping, pale sulphur yellow, with darker yellow corona more or less dentate at the margin. Perianth segments ovate to elliptic-lanceolate and slightly imbricated.

The recognised varieties differ from the type in such features as size, colour, length of perianth tube, and shape of corona and perianth segments. They are often restricted to definite geographical regions, such as var. *platilobus* from Lorraine, var. *festinus* from the Dauphiné and the Alps, and var. *porrigens* from Lyons.

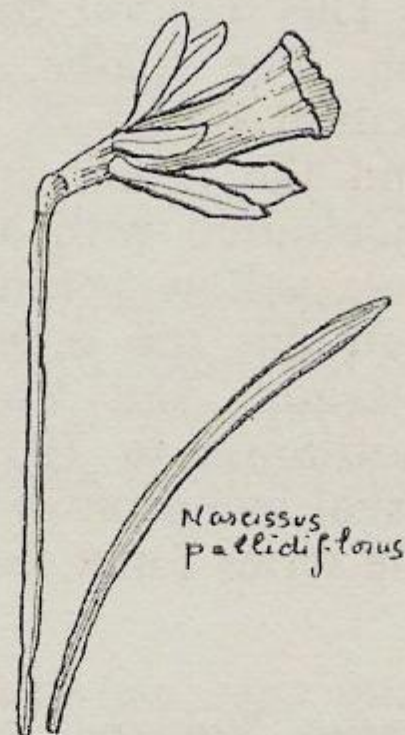
It is interesting to note that Parkinson in the early 17th century suggested the name of *Pseudonarcissus pyrenaeus variformis* to include numerous Pyrenean forms received by him. This underlines the fact that the Pyrenees may well be the original home of this species, which, unlike other species of the series, is not restricted to mountains, but has adapted itself to life on the plains, and thus has spread so widely.

Narcissus pallidiflorus Pugsley (illustration p. 100)

This is the *N. pallidus praecox* of Barr. Together with its variety *intermedius*, and *N. macrolobus*, it makes up the characteristic, easily recognisable, group so suitably described by Parkinson as the "Early Straw coloured Daffodil."

All these daffodils have in common a pale straw-coloured flower, a short deflexed pedicel, more or less drooping flowers, and an early flowering period. All are predominantly mountain plants, and although some writers have related them closely to *N. pseudonarcissus*, anyone who has seen these beautiful daffodils growing in nature would agree with Pugsley that they are far more handsome.

The type species was collected by Barr near Bayonne in the Western Pyrenees in 1882. It is of moderate height, with both leaves and scape 15—30 cm. long, and has a very short strongly deflexed pedicel. The flower, of moderate size, is horizontal or drooping, of an almost concolorous straw colour, the perianth segments being broadly oval and slightly imbricated, while the corona, sometimes of slightly darker yellow, is rather broad, dilated, spreading, and more or less lobed.



Pugsley's variety *intermedius* is the usual form in the Eastern and Central Pyrenees. Here it grows in immense numbers at fairly high altitudes of 2000—3000 m., following the receding snow up the high valleys; it is often associated with sheets of pink *Erythronium dens-canis*. It differs from the type in being of an almost concolorous pale primrose yellow, and in its somewhat twisted perianth segments, sub-erect and falling over the corona, which, itself, is not spreading.

Narcissus macrolobus Jord.

This species seems to be restricted to the Central and Eastern Pyrenees. It resembles *N. pallidiflorus* in colour, but the flowers are of a very different appearance, the broad perianth segments being both imbricated and twisted, and ascending over the corona; the broad corona is expanded above, with its spreading margin cut into rounded lobes.

N. macrolobus, in our experience, often grows with *N. pallidiflorus* var. *intermedius*, and as they flower at the same time, many intermediate forms are found.

Series Bicolores BI-COLOURED TRUMPET DAFFODILS

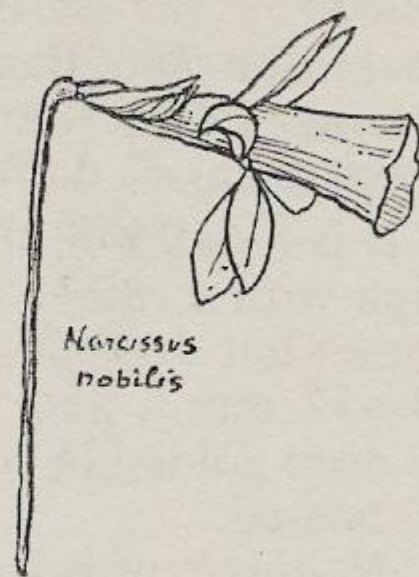
Under this unscientific but convenient heading we may include many of the bi-coloured daffodils which are so striking and beautiful a part of the Pyrenean scene. Their classification is far from easy, and Bowles remarks that the old term "Variiformis" as applied to these daffodils would be a good and descriptive name for "this variable clan."

Narcissus nobilis Schult.

This handsome daffodil, 15—50 cm. high, with pale yellow perianth segments and deep golden corona is widely distributed in Northern Spain and the Western and Central Pyrenees, becoming scarcer to the east. It flowers rather late, often in June.

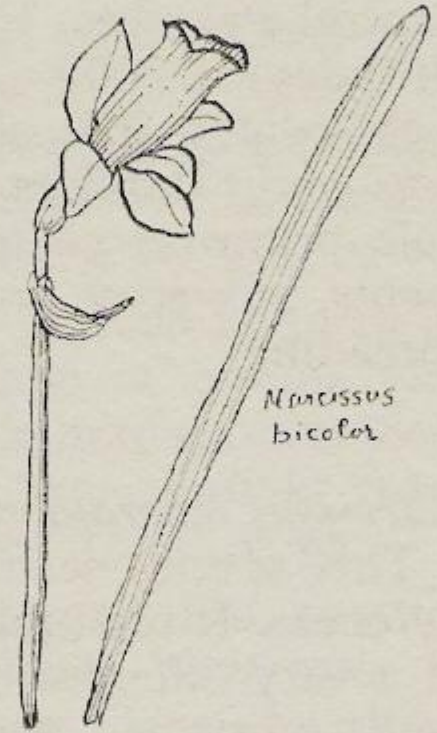
The pedicel, 8—15 mm. long, is sub-erect, and the large flowers are horizontal or ascending. The perianth segments, elliptic-oblong, are imbricated below and twisted, while the corona is expanded and spreading at the margin, which is cut into deep lobes.

A very tall, large flowered, variety, *leonensis*, has been described from the Province of Leon.



Narcissus bicolor Linn.

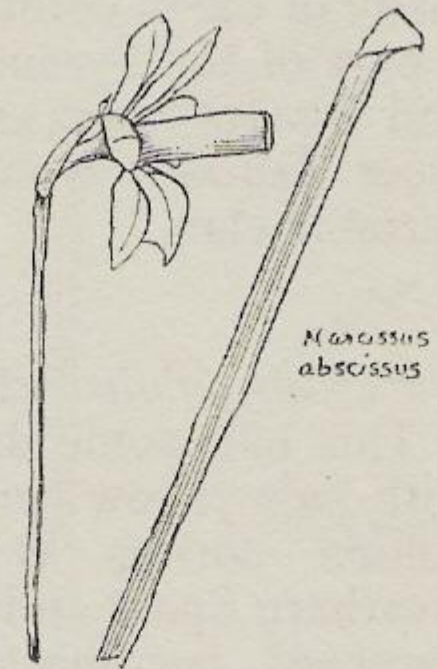
A very distinct species, with large bulb, very wide leaves (12—20 mm.), and stamens free almost to the base of the perianth tube. The flowers are of moderate size, ascending or horizontal, on nearly erect pedicels. The perianth segments, slightly imbricated but not twisted, are cream coloured, and the golden corona is large, with more or less spreading margin. *Narcissus bicolor* var. *lorifolius* Pugsley, a daffodil of uncertain origin, but clearly related to the type species, was in cultivation at one time, but has now disappeared.



N. bicolor, with smaller flowers and shorter perianth tube than *N. nobilis*, flowers early in the Eastern and Central Pyrenees, often in May. There are, as has been said, many variable bi-coloured daffodils flowering in the Pyrenees between early May and late June, and we have found their accurate identification to be extremely difficult.

Narcissus abscissus Schult. (colour illustration p. 39, close-up p. 100)

This species, with its varieties, is commonly grouped with *N. bicolor*. It differs from that species widely in its smaller bulb, its narrower leaves (10—12 mm.), and above all, in its highly distinctive corona which is cylindrical, usually narrow, and with an abruptly truncated margin. This striking feature was noted by the early 17th century botanists Parkinson and Bauhin: it is responsible for the apt name coined by Parkinson, the "clipt-trunke" daffodil.



It is a daffodil of medium size, 30—40 cm. high with a rather large flower, horizontal or somewhat drooping, borne on an erect pedicel: perianth tube short (8—12 mm.), and perianth segments ovate-lanceolate, pale yellow to deep golden in colour: corona straight, cylindrical, and terminally truncated.

N. abscissus is a Pyrenean daffodil, found along the whole mountain chain, on both north and south sides. It is also found in the Corbieres. This is the first of the Pyrenean daffodils to flower, its season opening in April, and continuing through the first half of May. It is found in great numbers, in meadows and on hillsides,

from 1200—2500 m., often associated with the Pyrenean fritillary, Pyrenean oxlips, and gentians of the *G. verna* group. We have found it at quite high altitudes on rocky outcrops and scree where much snow was still lying; here it was in dwarf form, and sometimes associated with *Tulipa australis*. Although *N. abscissus* is often more or less bi-coloured, concolorous forms of a deep orange are sometimes seen.

Bowles remarks that *N. abscissus* is a rather dull daffodil, showing little variation in nature, but to the non-expert this uniformity comes as a welcome relief after dealing with other highly variable species. *Narcissus abscissus* var. *gracilis* has narrower perianth segments than the type, and a narrower corona. It is a graceful and very distinct variety, which was described from specimens collected near Gavarnie. As Rouy says, it also occurs in the Haute Garonne, and we have found it growing here, in the valley of the Inola in Spain, with the type *N. abscissus*. It was usually in a concolorous deep orange form.

Series Albiflores. WHITE DAFFODILS

This Series includes some of the most lovely of the Spanish daffodils: they are also some of the rarest, and have suffered greatly at the hands of collectors.

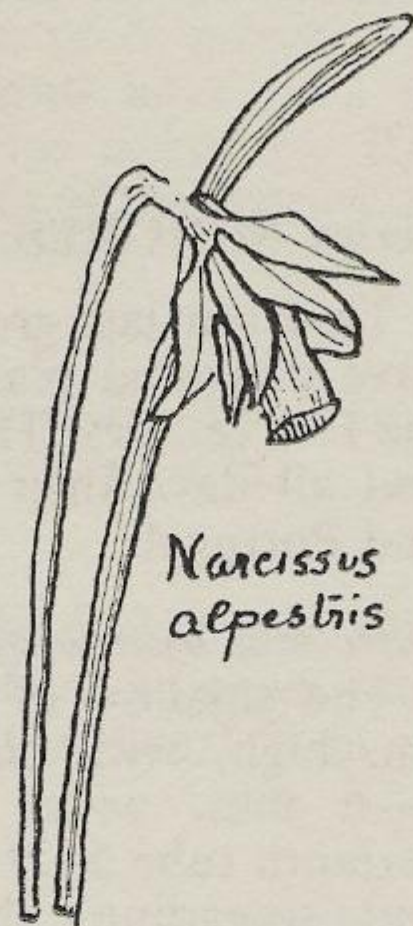
Narcissus alpestris Pugsley (illustration p. 100)

A small daffodil reaching only 10—15 cm. in height. Leaves erect, glaucous, and channelled. Pedicel slender, curved. Flowers small and drooping, pure white in colour. Perianth tube 10—13 mm. long; segments narrowly oblong, drooping over the inverted corona, and spirally twisted. Corona long and narrow, with waved but truncate margin.

This charming little Pyrenean daffodil, dwarf in stature, with drooping flowers, blooms in May and early June. Although ruthlessly collected when discovered (or rediscovered) in the late 19th century, it still, fortunately, persists in more than one locality in the Spanish Pyrenees.

Narcissus moschatus Linn.

This daffodil, larger than *N. alpestris* (25—35 cm. in height), and with broader leaves, was grown in gardens in the early 17th Century and most probably had a Spanish origin, though no definite records exist. It seems identical with the plant now grown in gardens under the name of *N. cernuus*.



Narcissus tortuosus Haw.

This is a still larger white daffodil, with long narrow corona and very twisted perianth segments. It seems to have been in cultivation since very early times, but there are no records of its origin. In 1925 Leroy collected a plant of rather similar type near Santander. Bowles dismisses *N. tortuosus* as probably a garden seedling, perhaps of *N. moschatus*. It is possible that the question will be resolved by the rediscovery of this species in the wild.

Narcissus albescens Pugsley.

Another large white or very pale yellow daffodil, with broad leaves (10—12 mm.), horizontal or only slightly drooping flowers and somewhat twisted perianth segments. It is unknown as a wild plant, but has been grown in gardens for many years.

To sum up the white daffodils: *N. alpestris* is the only certainly wild species. *N. moschatus*, *N. tortuosus*, and possibly *N. albescens* are examples of species known and grown by gardeners since the 17th century. It is likely that no white daffodils were ever very common in nature, and that collecting for horticulture has exterminated some and greatly reduced others. There is, of course, no excuse for this at the present day, since none of the wild white species do well in cultivation and there is a good range of white hybrids of heartier constitution for garden use.

Series MINORES. DWARF DAFFODILS

This, our last group of the *Pseudonarcissi*, includes species which have delighted plant lovers and gardeners since the beginning of the 17th century. These attractive miniatures are very early flowering, and all have their main centre in the mountains of N.W. Spain and Portugal.

Narcissus asturiensis Pugsley.

The smallest of all daffodils, only 7—12 cm. high, with glaucous channelled leaves 2—6 mm. wide: pedicel slightly curved: perianth tube 5—9 mm. long: segments erect and spreading, shorter than the corona: corona inflated below, constricted about the middle, abruptly dilated and spreading at the margin, which may be rather deeply dentate. The whole flower is of a soft yellow, and is concolorous.

*Narcissus asturiensis*

NARCISSI OF THE SECTION PSEUDONARCISSUS

Narcissus asturiensis is, as the name implies, native in the mountains of Asturia, is fairly widely distributed there, and extends to Central Portugal. Unfortunately this charming little species is still being collected on a large scale, and is in danger of becoming much scarcer than formerly. This is deplorable, since it is a daffodil that comes easily from seed, and even seeds itself in gardens.

Narcissus minor Linn.

This species, which has been constantly confused with *N. asturiensis* in the literature, was in cultivation in England in the 16th century. Linnaeus gave its habitat as Spain, and later writers speak of it as growing in Spain or Portugal.

N. minor was not, however, definitely recorded as a wild plant until recent times, when Dr. Giuseppi of the Alpine Garden Society rediscovered it on the Serra da Estrella in Portugal (according to Bowles).

N. minor is a much larger plant than *N. asturiensis*, 12—15 cm. in height with leaves 4—6 mm. wide. Perianth tube 11—18 mm. long with erect spreading segments of a soft yellow. Corona not constricted, and of a deeper shade of yellow: somewhat dilated towards the margin.

Narcissus pumilus Salisb.

This species is still larger than *N. minor*, reaching a height of 15—22 cm., and its flowers generally resembling those of *N. minor*.

Both the type species and its variety *fimbriatus* have been in cultivation for a long while, but their origin was unknown. Recently, however, Dr. Giuseppi found a dwarf form of the species on the Serra da Estrella.

Narcissus nanus Spach.

This daffodil, differing in relatively minor features from *N. minor* and *N. pumilus*, is known from gardens, but not in the wild.

Narcissus parviflorus Pugsley.

This species seems to have no real claim to be included in this group. It comes from Gedre in the Pyrenees, where it grows with *N. abscissus*, which it resembles, and is probably a dwarf form of that species.

Narcissus cyclamineus DC.

This remarkable and beautiful little narcissus from N. Portugal and Galicia is included in the Section Pseudonarcissus by Fernandes. It is, however, so very different that Pugsley excluded it from his Ajax section Pseudonarcissus and put it in a separate section "Cyclaminopsis". It will not be dealt with here, nor will any of the naturally occurring hybrid daffodils.