

HOME & GARDEN

Ann Landers
Californ

Garden shows beat catalogs, descriptions hands down

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Recorder Columnist

Whether it be the rose show, the azalea show, a general garden show or a spring bulb show — flower shows are wonderful ways of getting to know plants and flowers more truly than is possible through the verbal descriptions or fantastically bright photos in the garden catalogs.

After seeing a plant you will have a much better idea of its size, color and personality, whether it is bold like the very large and bright Golden Harvest daffodil or quiet and retiring like the pale miniature daffodil *N. triandrus* album, with its small pendulous flowers. With this knowledge you will be able to make better decisions about what new plants will work well for you in your garden.

BETWEEN THE ROWS

So although spring is beginning to scent the air, my own daffodils are just nudging the soil with green shoots. Therefore, it was with a great sense of excitement that I opened the door on the Spring Bulb Flower Show at the Lyman Conservatory at Smith College last week. I was greeted by a rainbow of colors and the scent of hyacinths in the air.

Often the first spring flower to bloom is the crocus and there were many on display. My favorite was a white crocus named *Jeanne d'Arc*, which seemed a fitting name for this stalwart little plant that often braves the last snows of winter to bloom.

Then the daffodils. There was the buttery yellow *Cheerfulness* with its ruffled trumpet set amid a creamy perianth, *Barrett Browning* with an almost orange trumpet and a pale yellow perianth, and the aforementioned giant *Golden Harvest*. And that was just for starters.

I was very impressed by the tulip because, although I don't grow them myself, I think they are among the most dramatic flowers. The *Emperor*, especially, was a majestic specimen with deep salmon petals shading to lemon at the base and it would serve as an appropriate counterpart to *The Queen of Sheba* whose scarlet petals were tipped with gold.

I was especially fond of a tiny red tulip named *Olaf* and the *Princess* *Fandier* tulip who red blossoms barely cleared the leaves. There was also a pot of *Parrot Wonder* and this was a marvel, indeed, with its new-green fringed petals hiding among the leaves.

This winter I've done a lot of reading in English garden books and now that I've made the acquaintance of the primrose at the flower show, I recognize their charms and I can certainly understand why some English gardeners have been moved to devote whole sections of their gardens to the primrose alone. It was also understandable that these early spring flowers were allowed into the bulb show although they are not propagated by bulbs. The five-petaled blossoms come in a variety of colors, white with yellow-green centers, plum with orange centers, and some are deeply tinted and some are as pale as a watercolor wash.

For the first time I met the scilla *iberica* which is the smallest of the scillas and the first to bloom in the spring. Because they are tiny, only reaching a height of three or four inches, they are very subdued when planted in a pot as they were at the flower show, but when you plant them at home they should be arranged in large masses so their intense blue flowers can produce a striking effect. There was also something to learn



about display at the flower show. The hundreds of potted bulbs were arranged around and in front of massively grouped potted azaleas and a dense shrub called *citrus canariensis* which bore delicate leaves and small yellow flowers. These shrubs provided a background that enabled the bulbs to be shown off to their best advantage. This is something to remember when arranging our own houseplants. A collection is not necessarily a display, but when careful thought is given to the juxtaposition of different foliage textures, colors and shapes you can create an enormously effective display.

While I was at the Lyman Conservatory I made a tour through the other rooms and this is something I recommend to everyone. There are many rooms and each one provides the proper light, temperature and humidity for a given group of plants. The largest and most magnificent room was the *Jungle room* which sheltered the *Bird of Paradise* plant, and even banana trees laden with a heavy harvest.

From the jungle room you can wander into a room filled with all manner of ferns. The center plot is

dominated by a 12-foot tree fern, *Dicksonia Antarctica*, whose shaggy trunk is about a foot in diameter. It is surrounded by other ferns of more modest proportions.

One room was filled with blooming plants, old-fashioned stocks, several varieties of oxalis which is often sold by florists as a shamrock plant, and a *calceolaria*, the pocketbook plant in a shade so deep and lush and red that the pouch-like flowers looked more like an elegant velvet evening bag than just a "pocketbook."

There is a room full of cacti and two rooms that have benches laden with plants and pools to show off a collection of water plants including a beautiful lavender water lily. The Lyman Conservatory is full of horticultural treasures and delights, although I must confess that while I was there a group of visiting nursery school children were much more fascinated with the goldfish in the water lily pool than with the flowers. But, if you are interested in plants (as well as goldfish) I urge you to visit the Conservatory. It is open most days from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. and is a treat — even when the spring bulb show is over.

GARDEN CALENDAR

The following information is provided by the Franklin County Extension Service

Now is the time to:

- Check peach trees for winter injury
- Start cool weather vegetable crops in cold frames
- Start peppers and onions inside
- Spot seed bare spots in the lawn

Note:

- There are special gardening tools on the market for handicapped people
- The Extension service is expecting a spring rush of gardeners wanting soil samples. Call the Extension office at 774-2902 for information about having samples tested now

DEAR ANN LANDERS: I public and I hope you will give Dear Fellow Citizens of the an and am proud of my state record straight.

Believe it or not, not ever beach every day and to Diane on oranges and avocados that yard.

Everyone in San Francisco drugs and go to work on roll drivers out to ram the rear state license plate.

We have many beautiful universities and colleges, e churches, synagogues and a f

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Dear Mr. C.: Apparently I would rather live in California its population has exploded I California may have smog a didn't mention) but it does N tornados, cyclones and six ft I can open the garage door and I love Chicago, but Califor especially in March!

DEAR ANN LANDERS: Ah weight. Here are two simple guaranteed.

- (1) Never eat anything you
 - (2) Always leave something
- This eliminates cocktail crackers and nuts. See how ea

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