

# Bulb Gardening

News and advice for better gardening

Newsletter no. 25

## BELLADONNA MULTIFLORA NOTES

Our interest in these intriguing forms of belladonna lilies began when, in the early 1990's, I (Will) helped Win Grevis-James of Chudleigh Park Gardens nursery disperse his bulb stocks when he retired.



*An umbel with a full complement of flowers*

Amongst his collection was a particularly robust, deeply coloured belladonna lily with radially arranged flowers. The flower count wasn't particularly high but the flowers were big and well formed with a delicious perfume. I kept some of these belladonnas and began hybridising them but sadly they proved to be at least seed infertile. This delayed any immediate results but our eye was in for other superior belladonnas. Old abandoned gardens, stray plants on the roadside and other gardeners became a source for other genetics and we collected about 40 different forms. Some of these clones were distributed under the codes "CP" and "BW".

A fun part of being a gardener is sharing plants and knowledge and a great way to do so is as a member of a gardening club. Membership of the International Bulb Society proved to be particularly inspirational and helped develop an even greater appreciation of these bulbs by contact with experts.

Early on, communication was done by 'round robins' where a chain letter would be initiated on a topic of interest and members would circulate and add to it.

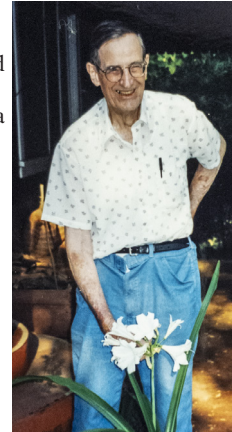


In 1994 this robin was transferred to the fledgling internet. A listserve was established where members could circulate e-mails and suddenly there was easy access to experts all around the world. These radially flowered belladonnas became a topic and the papers written by Les Hannibal in California discussed. Les (pictured above with a Crinodonna) was then elderly, but was drawn into the conversation and shared even more information than he published. His valuable insights helped my breeding efforts. For example, if the temperatures at flowering are too high, crosses aren't successful so the seed is produced parthenogenetically and is identical to the mother plant. Somehow I had noticed this, but was unsure of the mechanism.

Les had determined that these Belladonnas had originated in Australia at the hand of Bidwell, a botanist and plant explorer at Elizabeth Farm, the Macarthur estate, in the 1850's. He believed they were a hybrid between Belladonna and a Brunsvigia. He attempted to reproduce the cross to determine the Brunsvigia species but was never successful.

Les referred to them as Bidwell hybrids or Multifloras and had opinions as to the morphology of F1's & F2's etc. and had noticed a reversion back to a non-radially flowered Belladonna.

Les had me researching the Macarthur correspondence in the State Library of NSW for him. As Les was in his 90's and ailing we decided to visit him in California in the Autumn of 1999. A trip to the West Coast of the US was organised and other bulb contacts approached. I was honoured to be asked to give two talks to some of the legends of the bulb world.



We came home with some amazing memories and some Multifloras from Les and also some hand picked beauties from the late Bill Welch (left) of Carmel Valley, whose hybrid swarm inspired us to grow them in a similar manner, as they aren't easy to grow in a traditional breeding program.



*Selecting multifloras from Bill Welch's farm*

## WORLD DAFFODIL CONVENTION UPDATE

Last year our newsletter was mainly about the much anticipated World Daffodil Convention. We were looking forward to this event as were many other daffodil lovers in Australia and overseas, but of course the global pandemic disrupted those plans along with everything else.

At the time of writing there is still a hope that the next Daffodil World Conference will be in Australia but which spring is still to be determined.

## Gambler's Pot Luck



At the end of the dispatch season in April we often have small quantities of bulbs packaged up. We offer these bulbs at half-price to people who are happy to take 'pot-luck.'

We make up packages of bulbs to the value of at least \$100 worth. These are available for \$59.50 including postage. The packages generally contain a wide variety of different bulbs as well as some daffodils.

To order, simply add to your order;

**Gambler's Pot-Luck \$59.50**

## 2021 SHOW DATES

To be determined by Covid-19 restrictions and which shows run.



**Farm Display (Menzies Creek)**  
Friday 27<sup>th</sup> Aug. to Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> Sep.



*Last springs contactless farm gate shop.*

## WE APOLOGISE

again for the late publication of the catalogue but 2020 was a difficult year, not just for the disruptions of the pandemic, but also as Will had a serious fall through the shed roof (not that he remembers). Thanks to the efforts of our wonderful emergency and medical teams, we are very grateful to be able to say that Will has made a full recovery. We also thank all our wonderful customers you for your patience and continued support.

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