

Greg Freeman's Garden Chronicle



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On previous page...Even in late winter, the Atlanta Botanical Garden in beautiful Midtown Atlanta, Georgia, USA, is a haven for an array of botanical treasures.

As shared in the previous *Garden Chronicle*, I have been on the mend from a broken ankle, and my physical therapy continued well into late spring. I am intentionally walking almost every day for exercise, but swelling and pain still persist. While the surgeon and various medical professionals have insisted that this will eventually go away, many who have experienced the same injury have told me that there is always residual pain and swelling. Oh, joy!

All of that said, by the grace of God, I have thankfully made significant progress. I exhibited and/or judged at three different flower shows during the past few months. Attending the first show was quite painful. The second one was mostly tiring. By the time the third one rolled around, I fared reasonably well. At all three events, I managed by pacing myself, being rather sure-footed and sitting frequently.

Throughout the spring and early summer, my creativity returned, my gardening vision experienced a revival of sorts and I felt more comfortable accepting invitations to serve in various capacities.

I got around to completing a couple of new songs. And, in early June, I released a new single, "When Dad and I Went Fishin'," to radio. Independent recording artists have a difficult time breaking into radio, but a number of country music stations and radio shows have given the song some play, particularly around Father's Day. My promotional campaign included prominent ad space with *MusicRow.com* and multiple digital billboards on major arteries in Nashville during CMA Fest.

Speaking of music, I recently recorded remotely as part of the Harrison Sheckler Virtual Choir, backing two-time Grammy® winner Gloria Gaynor (of "I Will Survive" fame) on her rousing gospel number, "Talkin' 'Bout Jesus." Release date has yet to be announced. Gaynor, incidentally, will be appearing on PBS's *A Capitol Fourth* on July 4, 2022 at 8:00 pm. ET alongside host/country music star Mickey Guyton, gospel diva Yolanda Adams, pop sensation Andy Grammer, the National Symphony Orchestra and more!

Meanwhile my garden needs much work, but I am pleased to report that I have enjoyed ample blooms of coneflower, butterfly bush, crinum and wisteria, in addition to a great daffodil season. Beyond the garden, I have eliminated the last Bradford pear on the property, a decision that was both environmentally wise (due to the trees' invasive nature) and arguably life-saving. The limbs of that blasted tree have nearly decapitated me a time or two when I have mowed beneath it. Good riddance! I am grateful for Matthew Woodring and his son, who removed the tree and stump at reasonable cost.

Other activities to keep me occupied during my recovery have included the Smithsonian Associates World Art History Certificate program. I have thoroughly enjoyed lectures and presentations on Picasso, Matisse, Eakins and Renaissance architect Palladio, and I am a third of the way toward earning the required credits. These talks by various authorities, including the dynamic Dr. Rocky Ruggiero (I like that guy!), have been very enlightening.

Lastly, at the invitation of my friend, Jaydee Ager, I am involved in some behind-the-scenes activities regarding the 2023 American Daffodil Society National Convention and Show, to be held in Atlanta. I am Educational Division chairman, and am assisting with publicity.

As I forge ahead, progressing here and there on all fronts, I hope you all find your own station in life to be equally fulfilling inside and outside the garden. Remember, mindset is everything. Happy gardening, my friends

Greg Freeman, Publisher

What's Inside?

3 – Atlanta Botanical Garden Wows Visitors with Biennial Flower Show

10 – Lipscomb Daffodils Shine at Atlanta's Historic Oakland Cemetery

11 – Daydreaming of Italy, One Dish at a Time

14 – Winning Daffodils from Atlanta and Knoxville

18 – Remembering Mary McCall Winkler (1939-2022)

18 – High Hopes for Maltese Seeds

19 – Sausage-stuffed Sweet Peppers

22 – Blueberries, Wisteria, Mountain Drives and Old Men

24 – Photograph: *In Suspense*

Atlanta Botanical Garden Wows Visitors with Biennial Flower Show

Having begun conditioning some indoor plants back in autumn before I broke my ankle in November, and anticipating some early daffodils in the garden, I enjoyed an earlier than normal show season this year due to my decision to exhibit at the biennial Atlanta Botanical Garden Flower Show, which was held on February 25-27.

This well-organized show is great fun, and I was most impressed that, in spite of its lack of official affiliation with National Garden Clubs, Inc. or Garden Club of America, it was ultimately successful because members of local clubs affiliated with one national organization or the other came together to make it work. That is a valuable lesson for anyone, considering all of the divisions in our nation.

For years, Atlanta was known for the Southeastern Flower Show, which had been held at various locations, including the Georgia World Congress Center downtown. One year, it was even held in the Georgia State Capitol's rotunda, if I remember correctly. The SFS was the American South's Philadelphia Flower Show equivalent, and for years it worked, and it worked well. That said, like nearly all good things must, it came to an eventual end, and I will not get into its demise. Water under the bridge, as they say.

With the SFS gone, Atlanta languished without a major flower show for a while. Though I did not get to exhibit at the inaugural ABG Flower Show, my experience with the event in 2022 was a pleasurable one, and it marked the first time I



Be sure to check out www.GregFreeman.garden for original video content and other helpful information.



Greg Freeman

The 2022 Atlanta Botanical Garden Flower Show was held in the Garden's Mershon Hall. A fountain centerpiece adorned with a Dale Chihuly (b. 1941) glass sculpture is flanked by benches and formal hedges.

had been back to the ABG since 2010. With an ABG membership, I will be visiting much more frequently, and I especially have high hopes for the show. Though it hardly rivals the Philadelphia show (and never will due to its lack of vendor space and commercial exhibits), I believe the ABG Show has the potential to grow exponentially in popularity and attract more exhibitors. The public certainly took it in, and I had a fantastic time getting to know other exhibitors, as well as interacting with show volunteers and a few ABG visitors who perused the show out of curiosity.

Questions Answered

On Thursday, February 24, I drove from South Carolina to the Atlanta Botanical Garden to enter my plants and flowers. Since 2004, I had exhibited exclusively at daffodil shows, and my only previous general flower show had been in 2003. Quite honestly, I was not sure what to expect, but Sally Seeds, Horticulture Co-chair, had been in communication with me via e-mail and telephone prior to the show, and I felt more at ease, having gotten answers to my various questions.

Aware that even at small, friendly daffodil shows an entry can be disqualified or deemed “NAS” or “not according to schedule,” I took great pains to inspect my entry cards and abide by all the rules contained in the show schedule. With multiple daffodil stems, two pots of succulents and a couple of camellias in-hand, I began staging my blooms and getting my entry tags placed with the correct entries. I had been content to enter all of the standard daffodils in the single stem class, but a couple of the show volunteers suggested that I enter one of my standard daffodils, a seedling of my own breeding, in the Propagation, by seed, class. Reluctantly (and thankfully), I agreed.

As the show personnel carried my daffodils and succulents to the show floor, I struck up a conversation with a gentleman seated at a table with an assortment of lovely camellias. The man turned out to be Buckhead resident John Scarpucci, esteemed camellia exhibitor and judge. Holding the bright red doubles



Greg Freeman

Camellia japonica ‘Firebrand’

for him to have a closer look, I inquired, “Do you know this cultivar? I was going to enter it as simply *Camellia japonica*, if that is allowed.” He gave me that same look I impulsively give novice exhibitors at daffodil shows when they have a handful of ‘Ice Follies’ and say “I think I have a winner here somewhere.”

I smiled a little as he began scrolling through an American Camellia Society online database, a resource akin to the American Daffodil Society’s *DaffSeek*. Compared to the amazing array of cultivars on his table, my flowers stood about as good of a chance of winning as a three-legged, jockey-less horse taking the Kentucky Derby. Still, his database search solved a mystery. He determined that my red camellia bushes, which are quite common in yards and gardens all around my area thanks to generations of backyard nurserymen, are ‘Firebrand’, a cultivar originating in the 1840s at Magnolia Plantation & Gardens near Charleston.

Later in the day, I met my friends, Ricky McKinnie and Paul Beasley, of the five-time Grammy®-winning Blind Boys of Alabama, along with WAEC’s David Bright and a couple of his associates, for pizza at Little Zio over on Northside Drive near Georgia Tech, and afterwards I gave Ricky a lift back to his home and recording studio in Kirkwood, just east of downtown. His sister, Janice, was there, and I shared the camellia blooms with her. She was totally smitten by the flowers, and that gave me more pleasure than any show ribbon could have.....except for a Best in Show, perhaps! And that could have never happened.

Some Show Highlights

One of the first things I noticed about the show schedule was a class for terrariums, but it was limited to youth exhibitors. I love terrariums, and I remarked to Ms. Seeds that I was jealous that there was only a class for kids. She suggested that the schedule might be expanded in the future to include terrariums entered by adults. At any rate, the kids had beautiful entries, and the winner was a real stunner. Another highlight, which I failed to photograph, was a gorgeous *Clivia miniata* entry, and I was impressed with



Greg Freeman

Iris Savage’s blue ribbon-winning terrarium contained *Peperomia tetraphylla* (Acorn Peperomia), *Hypoestes phyllostachya* (polka dot plant), *Pilea mollis* (Moon Valley) and *Peperomia caperata* (emerald pepper). She is a member of the Peachtree Garden Club.

the Lenten roses, from which my sweet friend, Molly Adams, of Lookout Mountain, had a first place winner with her beautiful *Hellebores* cultivar. Again, I regrettably failed to photograph her winner. Speaking of Molly, I must say that her enthusiasm for this show is what drew me to it in the first place, and I was also delighted to see Stacey Wilson of Knoxville. Molly is a longtime friend, and Stacey is another fellow daffodil friend and exhibitor who is pursuing her accreditation as an American Daffodil Society judge. She, no doubt, will be an asset to ADS.

Among the exhibits that grabbed my attention, I saw a common denominator: Virginia Almand. I was admiring a winning trough when I struck up a conversation with a woman standing nearby. She was classy in her appearance and ladylike in her demeanor, reminding me of proper southern ladies I have met from Charleston, Savannah or New Orleans. And I mean that in the most flattering light. I remarked, “That’s really cool, isn’t it?” She went on to thank me and revealed

that the exhibit was hers! I soon discovered that Mrs. Almand was a formidable exhibitor, and has quite the résumé. She is a longtime member and former president of the Cherokee Garden Club, an approved horticulture judge with Garden Club of America (1991-2020) and past board member of numerous organizations, including the Cherokee Garden Library (three terms) and Trust for Public Land. My observation that others displayed deference in her presence was hardly a misconception. Mrs. Almand has earned their respect, and it inevitably shows.



Greg Freeman

This first place Woodland Trough, exhibited by Mrs. Virginia Neal Almand, contained *Buxus sempervirens* ‘Kingsville Dwarf’ (‘Kingsville Dwarf’ boxwood), *Euonymus japonicas* ‘Microphyllus’ (boxleaf euonymous), *Chamaecyparis obtusa* ‘Verdon’ (Verdon’s Hinoki cypress), *Acorus gramineus* ‘Pusillus Minimus Aureus’ (grassy leafed sweet flag) and *Saxifraga vietchiana* (creeping saxifrage).



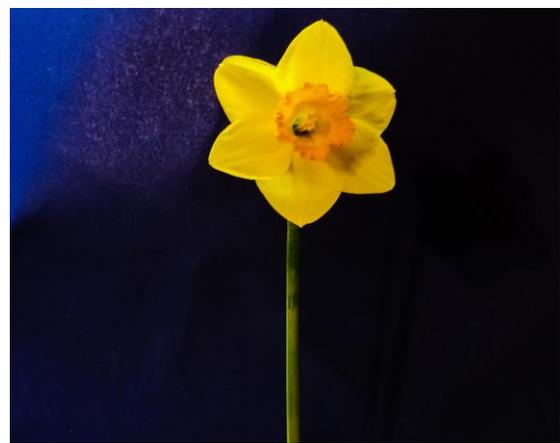
Greg Freeman

The first place in Herbs, culinary with sample recipe, was Mrs. Almand's *Laurus nobilis* (sweet bay), one of the larger exhibits in the show. It had been propagated from a cutting fifteen years previously, and it was, according to the show schedule, accompanied by a recipe. Needless to say, I need to try Mrs. Almand's mouthwatering roasted potatoes with olive oil and bay leaves. If memory serves me correctly, this exhibit was also the recipient of the Herb Society of America, Chattahoochee Unit Award.



Greg Freeman

My entry in the Old Friends class was this lonely *Haworthiopsis attenuata*, which I had acquired from an unknown dealer at the Rabun Flea Market near Rabun Gap, Georgia, on April 1, 2000. While this entry was last in its class, I still find it remarkable that it has lived for over two decades in this same vintage ceramic planter without a lot of fuss or care. The perfect botanical friend!



Greg Freeman

Not surprisingly, my *Narcissus* 'Hope House' 2Y-O was a winning daffodil for me. I say that not out of arrogance, but for the simple fact that it is such a fabulous flower. Quite honestly, I anticipated most of the daffodils would be entered by non-specialists, and I was correct. Typical big box store daffodils pale in comparison to cultivars like this one from my friend, Nial Watson, of Northern Ireland.



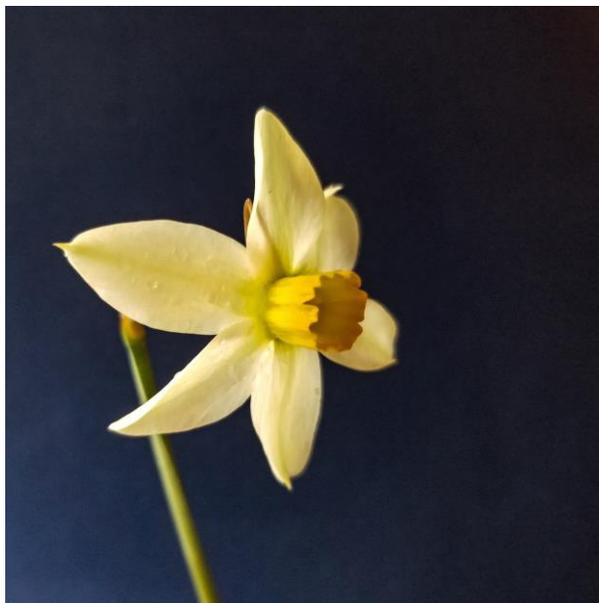
Greg Freeman

My miniature, *Narcissus* 'Pixel' 6Y-Y, hybridized by my friend, Steve Vinisky, of Sherwood, Oregon, USA, was second to my 'Hope House'. The two daffodils were the top two in a large class.



Greg Freeman

My potted collection of South African succulents – 'Little Cape Town', as I call it – was a first place winner. Plants include *Haworthiopsis coarctata*, *Crassula nudicaulis* var. *platyphylla minima*, *Crassula perforata variegata*, *Gasteria excelsa* and *Crassula muscosa*.



Greg Freeman

My daffodil seedling, *Narcissus* GSF-10A-17-01 12W-GYO ('Katrina Rea' x Koopowitz seedling HK2-08), a product of my own hybridizing, won the Propagation, grown from seed, class, and ultimately took the Propagation Award, receiving the following written remark from the judges: "Significant, what an accomplishment!"

A Near Perfect Experience

With three firsts, two seconds, one third and a prestigious award out of six entries, I was feeling pretty good by show's end. The event would have been perfect, if not for the nagging pain in my ankle and the fact that I locked my keys in my truck on the evening I retrieved my plants. A quick online search on my smart phone led me to a locksmith who replied assuredly, "I'll see you in twenty minutes." Forty minutes and \$100 later, my keys were finally liberated.



Greg Freeman

Mrs. Almand's winning Topiary, single-stemmed, standard, no wire, was *Buxus microphylla* 'Grace Hendrick Phillips', which had been in her possession for nearly twenty years. The judges awarded the entry Best in Show, commenting, "18 years: extraordinary achievement!"

Upon his arrival, I had noticed the young man's Cobb County license plate. I asked, "Did you drive all the way from Marietta?" "Oh, no," he answered. "I was up at Perimeter when I was dispatched." For those of you unfamiliar with the Metro Atlanta cityscape and the congestion around Perimeter Mall, let me just iterate that even on a Sunday evening he had been much more than a hop, skip and a jump away from Midtown. The boy appeared to be of Middle Eastern descent, and was friendly and quite inquisitive about the goings-on at a flower show. He fondly recalled, "My mom used to bring me here to the Garden when I was a kid." I began extolling all of the virtues of visiting public gardens and getting into gardening and flower shows. He asked, "So, you drove all the way from South Carolina to show your flowers, and you don't even win any money?" I thought for a moment and replied, "Well, you don't have to be crazy to be involved in any of this, but it sure helps." At that, I thanked him and wished him a safe journey home, and proceeded to laugh (at myself, mostly) as I made my way to Piedmont Avenue to exit the grounds.

Lipscomb Daffodils Shine at Atlanta’s Historic Oakland Cemetery

While in town to enter my daffodils in the Atlanta Botanical Garden Flower Show on February 24, I drove to Oakland Cemetery and strolled – very gingerly, I might add, due to my throbbing ankle – over some of the expansive grounds to check out the daffodils. It had been years since I had been to Oakland during daffodil blooming time, and I was not disappointed.

Oakland Cemetery, definitively outside of Atlanta’s confines during the Civil War, is now completely immersed in the city, surrounded by Downtown’s skyscrapers, the MARTA train line, Cabbagetown’s former Fulton Bag and Cotton Mill (now loft apartments) and its surrounding historic “mill village” homes, and a bustling, revitalized Memorial Drive. *Gone with the Wind* author Margaret Mitchell (1900-1949), golfing great Bobby Jones (1902-1971) and Atlanta’s first black mayor Maynard Jackson (1938-2003), for whom the Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport is named in part, are just a few of the notables who are buried at Oakland.

Former Georgia Daffodil Society president Captain John Lipscomb was truly an asset to the Georgia Daffodil Society and Atlanta gardens, in general, as he spent many years educating folks about daffodils, and sharing bulbs. He was my first contact in the world of daffodils when I got started. Upon his death, some of his bulbs were sold to GDS members, and I bought a few. His pastures near Alpharetta were filled with bulbs, and his daughter, Dr. Susan Goodman, donated many to Oakland Cemetery where they are thriving today in his memory.



Greg Freeman

Daydreaming of Italy, One Dish at a Time

Mention Italy, and it is as if antennae magically appear from behind my ears to pick up every nuance of the simplest conversations regarding a country whose diverse landscape I find breathtaking, whose culinary wonders I find irresistible and whose siren's song has beckoned me to come hither for years. I am not necessarily one to eavesdrop, but all-things Italian, especially conversations about Italian food, get my attention!

Italy is on my mind so often that I have explored taking any number of possible trips, but where does one begin? Michelangelo's Florence is a must-see. I would love to follow in the footsteps of John Steinbeck (1902-1968) and Tennessee Williams (1911-1983) in Positano. And what about Rome, Genoa, Pisa, Naples, Milan, Lake Como, Venice, the Cinque Terre, Sicily and so on? Until I make a trip to Italy, I am stuck watching *Rick Steves' Europe* on PBS and *Katie Parla's Rome* on Recipe.tv, but television shows like these have only made me long *more* for this country to which I have never been.

My favorite cooking show is *Lidia's Kitchen*, hosted by Lidia Bastianich (b. 1947) on PBS television. In the most recent season, in particular, Lidia has shared footage from her trips to Italy where she has interacted with and cooked alongside



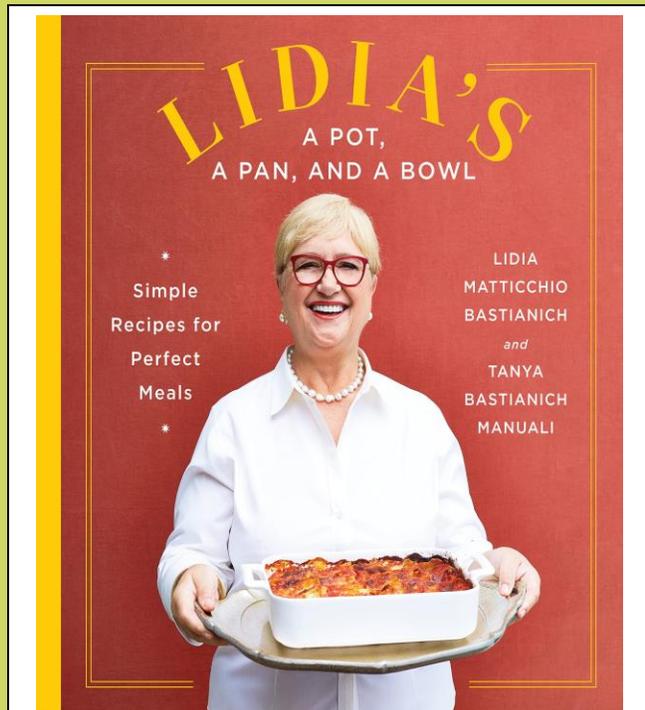
friends and relatives who live in the boot-shaped Mediterranean country. The scenery is a spectacular backdrop, and the fresh produce with which she prepares her dishes is deliciously appealing. The Italians know how to eat *and* garden well!

Lidia's segments in which she cooks outside in the garden "under the wine trestle," as she puts it, also prove inspiring, even though she is stateside at her New York residence. Simple, high quality ingredients, she insists, produce the most wonderful dishes, and one cannot help but feel transported to a faraway place as she discusses her cooking techniques and the finer points of preparing Italian-American cuisine inspired by her childhood.

Earlier this year, I shared some photographs of my own dishes with the producers of *Lidia's Kitchen*, simply desiring to express to Lidia how her show has inspired me and made me more adept in the kitchen. To my complete surprise, her production company reached out to me, expressing a desire to include my photographs on a future episode. After some rewording of the assignment/release to acknowledge that I had previously published one of the photographs here via *Greg Freeman's Garden Chronicle* and on social media, all is good to go. It is expected that my shots might appear in Season 10 this fall, which Lidia and her team have been filming in recent months.

Lidia's mother, Erminia Motika (1921-2021), passed away just a few months before my mother slipped away into eternity, and I corresponded with Lidia earlier this year around the anniversary of her mother's death. I shared how my mother had been a devoted fan and enjoyed seeing Lidia and Erminia together on the show. Also, I enclosed some seeds of my favorite basil.

I have found Lidia Bastianich to be as genuine and warm as she appears on television, and I am honored that her production team has chosen to include my photography in the new season. At this point, I do not know exactly when any of it will air, and given Lidia's tendency to mention first names only, my readers will have to just listen for her to refer to some images from "Greg." At any rate, I daydream of Italy a little each time I prepare a Lidia-inspired dish, and I hope my own creations inspire others to expand their culinary boundaries and their seed-planting repertoire. The gastronomical journey is well worth it!



Lidia Bastianich's latest book, *Lidia's A Pot, A Pan, and a Bowl*, can be purchased by simply clicking the image above.

The advertisement features a light pink background. On the left, the text 'Never pay full price on flights again.' is written in a dark blue, serif font. Below this text is a red, rounded rectangular button with the words 'Sign Up' in white. On the right side, there is an illustration of a man in a red shirt and blue shorts standing on a rock, looking through a telescope. The background of the illustration shows a landscape with green hills, a blue sky with birds, and a yellow sun. In the top right corner of the ad, the Scott's Cheap Flights logo is displayed, consisting of a red circle with a white 'S' and the text 'SCOTT'S CHEAP FLIGHTS' next to it.



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Heirloom Tazettas

From Daffodil Authority Sara Van Beck, author of *Daffodils in American Gardens, 1733-1940*
and co-author of *Daffodils in Florida: A Field Guide to the Coastal South*



Recaptured Garden Legacies

From Southern American Gardens of the 19th and Early 20th Centuries

www.HeirloomTazettas.com

Winning Daffodils from Atlanta and Knoxville

Following the Atlanta Botanical Garden Flower Show in February, it was time for some serious daffodil shows, which rolled around in March.

The Georgia Daffodil Society Show, held at Roswell's Chattahoochee Nature Center on March 12, was one for the record books! After experiencing seasonally warm days, the weather took a turn for the worse just prior to the show. I had to take a detour to reach the CNC in a town that has got to be Atlanta's most confusing suburb. Trees were down here and there. Upon arrival at the show, I hobbled into a dark, chilly exhibit hall where my fellow exhibitors were staging flowers by flashlight. I asked, "Did someone forget to pay the power bill?" The electricity came on and off intermittently for a while and finally *stayed* off. We had a marvelous show, an enjoyable luncheon and, fortunately, a great sense of humor! I later commented that it was the most fun I had ever had at a daffodil show, and I stand by that remark. As a judge, I was joined by Jackie Turbidy, who had flown in from her St. Simon's Island residence, and student judge Diane Cockerham of suburban Knoxville. This was my first time judging with Jackie, and she was an absolute hoot! Just as seasoned judges had given me much leeway as a student judge, Jackie and I put Diane on the spot, and she made sound decisions and gave good reasons justifying them. The three of us got along swimmingly.



Tom Stettner

'Mesa Verde' 12G-GGY, 1st Vase of Three



Tom Stettner

'Katrina Rea' 6W-WOO, 1st Vase of Three



Tom Stettner

1st Large-cupped Collection, ADS Purple Ribbon (for Best Five Stems)

Back row, L to R: Duncan Seedling 3411 2Y-OOR ('Lennymore' x 'Colourful'), 'Forged Gold' 2Y-Y, Vinisky Seedling V00-78-5 2YYW-W (['Swedish Fjord' x 'Altun Ha'] x ['Sun Gem' x 'Goff's Caye']); Front row, L to R: 'Stoke Charity' 2W-W, 'Hampton Court' 2Y-YYO



Tom Stettner

Jaydee Ager's ADS Lavender Ribbon-winning Five Miniatures

L to R: 'Itsy Bitsy Splitsy' 11aY-O, 'Tiny Bubbles' 12Y-Y, 'Sundial' 7Y-Y, 'Tête-à-Tête' 12Y-Y, 'Tête Bouclé' 4Y-Y



Tom Stettner

Marie Bozievich Ribbon-winning Collection (12 cultivars from 4 or More Divisions)

Back row, L to R: 'Treasure Hunt' 2Y-Y, 'Rathowen Gold' 1Y-Y, 'Mesa Verde' 12G-GGY, 'Feline Queen' 1Y-O, Middle row, L to R: 'Red Storm' 2O-R, 'Splatter' 11aW-Y, Robertson Seedling 534 2Y-O, Freeman Seedling GSF-10B-17-01 2Y-O ('Bailey' x 'Red Storm') (**ADS Rose Ribbon winner for Best Seedling**); Front row, L to R: 'Forged Gold' 2Y-Y, 'Sammy Girl' 8W-P, 'Hot Lava' 2O-O, 'Katrina Rea' 6W-WOO



Tom Stettner

Molly Adams' gorgeous 'Magic Lantern' 1Y-O, from her ADS White Ribbon-winning vase of three was the Gold Ribbon (Best in Show) winner at Roswell.

The East Tennessee Daffodil Society Show was held at a new venue this year, after years of utilizing the Ellington Plant Sciences Building on the campus of the University of Tennessee. Having stepped in to co-chair the show in Lynn Ladd's absence (due to surgery), Stacey Wilson and Diane Cockerham did a fine job, and Stacey's church, Grace Church, graciously welcomed our event. I had not been to Knoxville since 2019, and it felt great to return to a place that, for me, always evokes thoughts of its native son, novelist, screenwriter and film critic James Agee (1909-1955), and blues singer Ida Cox (1896-1967), who had lived there for years prior to her passing. I have written about both individuals, and I am always drawn to their neighborhoods when I return.

Due to the different location of the show this year, I stayed at a hotel I had never patronized before. The relatively new Embassy Suites Knoxville West on Parkside Drive was just minutes from my favorite Knoxville restaurant, Bombay Palace. After enjoying my fill of chicken biryani and vegetable pakoras, I was quite pleased that I had made the journey. I had missed that place! Of course, I never visit Knoxville without paying a visit to the Knoxville Museum of Art downtown at World's Fair Park, and this year I also ventured to East Knoxville, not far from where Ida Cox had once lived, to a predominantly African American section where beautiful, early twentieth century Arts and Crafts bungalows and vernacular architecture abound. In that area, I made my way to the Knoxville Botanical Garden, which is still coming into its own.

The daffodil show was a very small one, but I had a great time, in spite of the fact that I had brought several near perfect flowers and inadvertently froze them in my hotel room's mini fridge! Of course, I was forced to discard most of them, but I still managed to win the ADS White Ribbon with my vase of three 'Katrina Rea', the ADS Lavender Ribbon with my miniature five stems and the ADS Rose Ribbon with a seedling. The real star of the show was indisputably Diane Cockerham's 'Florence Joy'. Just as I had served on a judging panel in Atlanta with a veteran judge and Diane, a student judge, I judged at ETDS, serving alongside the very capable Jaydee Ager and student judge, Stacey Wilson. Another bright spot of the show was the enticing display of plants offered by [Marina's Botanicals](#), owned by Marina Lacey. I did not leave empty-handed.



Tom Stettner

Diane Cockerham's Gold Ribbon-winning 'Florence Joy' 2W-W was a hit in Knoxville.

Remembering Mary McCall Winkler (1939-2022)

Earlier this year, I lost a dear, life-long friend. Mary Winkler had known my parents before I was ever born, and we had been friends and fellow church members all my life. Mary, a native of the hills of nearby Rabun County, Georgia, loved to garden, and many of my favorite plants were gifts from her, including *Crinum x herbertii* and *Kniphofia uvaria*.



For most of my life, Mary and her family resided just a couple of miles up the road in West Union, but her last years were spent in neighboring Anderson County. Her move did not

prevent us from continuing our long talks, which were quite often taken to Olympic proportions. We discussed gardening, recipes, oral histories and the good ole days. Due to our personalities being quite similar, we butted heads every now and then, but our bond never suffered. Opinionated, strong-willed people can be like that. My last conversations with Mary were just prior to and right after Christmas 2021. Her rapid decline and passing in January was a shock, and I miss phoning her about my latest plant or learning about an exciting recipe she had just discovered. I am pleased that Mary's daughters and several of her grandchildren share her passion for cooking, gardening and holding on to those mountain traditions that indelibly influenced her.

High Hopes for Maltese Seeds

In early March, Vladimir Hempel of Berlin, Germany, posted on the American Daffodil Society's *HistoricDaff* listserv that he had collected some *Narcissus* seeds, presumably paperwhites (*Narcissus tazetta* subsp. *papyraceus*), in the Republic of Malta while on holiday. I was among several Americans who responded, desiring to have a few of them.

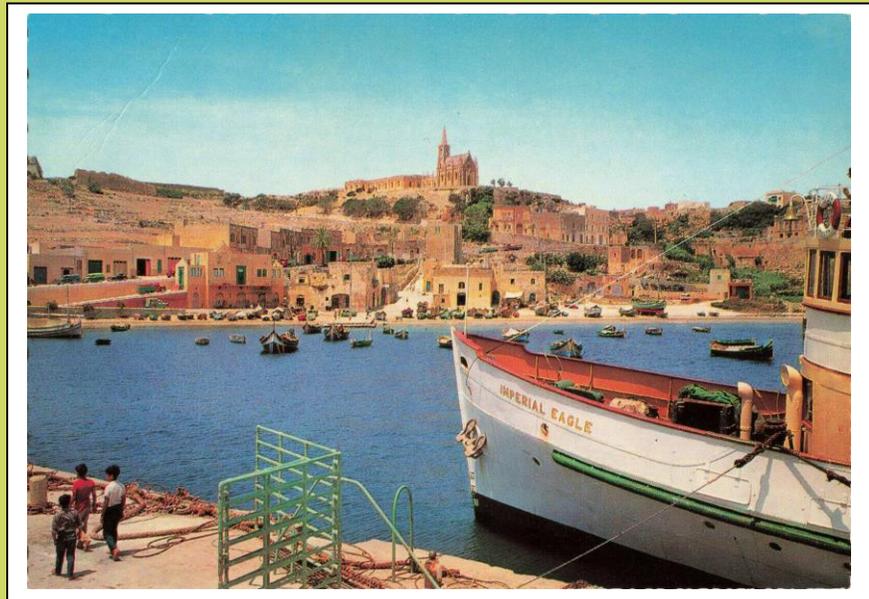
Malta, an archipelago located about fifty miles from Italy's isle of Sicily, is centrally located in the Mediterranean, making it strategically important through the centuries to everyone from the Phoenicians, Carthaginians, Romans, Greeks and Arabs to the Normans, French and, most

recently, the British, from whose empire the nation gained its independence in 1964. Biblical scholars generally regard Malta as the Melita referenced in the New Testament where Paul the Apostle was shipwrecked around AD 60. Paul would have encountered olive trees, figs and Aleppo pines, much like one might find two thousand years later. Today, non-native and invasive flora have been introduced to the islands, and it is reassuring to hear from Vlad that paperwhites, typical of the Mediterranean region, abound on the Maltese island of Gozo.

In his correspondence, he wrote that he was atop Ta' Dbiegi, one of three hills surrounding San Lawrenz, when he found the seeds:

These were collected on Gozo, at about 150 m high on the hill (the highest point on the island). It is the only place where I have found seeds.

After travelling from Malta to Germany, then making a trans-Atlantic journey to the USA, all in the course of a few weeks or so, the seeds are a welcomed experiment, and I can only hope that they germinate and perform well. Time will tell.



Hempel, Vladimir. Letter to Greg Freeman. 16 March 2022.

Sausage-stuffed Sweet Peppers

One of the joys of experimenting in the kitchen is coming up with creative ways to prepare otherwise ordinary foods that are typically prepared in predictable ways. Many restaurants, particularly in the American South, offer jalapeño poppers, but one seldom sees anyone prepare something interesting using milder peppers such as sweet banana peppers (except for pickled relish, perhaps) or my favorite, *Corno di Toro* (bull's horn), which has just a touch of heat. These Italian heirloom peppers are a delight to grow and they yield handsomely. Recently, I prepared my sausage-stuffed sweet peppers using colorful peppers purchased from the supermarket. The

result was tasty, but there is always more pleasure in preparing a meal using produce from one's own garden. In other words, grow your own peppers, if possible.

In my area, I am friends with members of the Wilson family, owners of a local meat processing company through which they offer sausage, hamburger and beef and pork cuts to restaurants and local retailers. They also sell directly to consumers through their own retail store, which I patronize from time to time. As far as their pork sausage is concerned, I can choose between hot, mild or sagey. I opt for their mild sausage, knowing that it will contain the obligatory fennel and a little bit of sage. The trick to preparing these peppers is to avoid winding up with a single overpowering flavor, and that is inevitable if the sausage is extra hot or laced with additional sage. Combined with my other ingredients, the result is a mix of flavors that produce a batch of stuffed peppers suitable for serving as appetizers or utilizing as a main course with a side of pasta or garden fresh vegetables.

1 lb. ground sausage

8 – 12 5-8” long sweet peppers

1 small onion (chopped)

1 – 2 garlic cloves (minced)

1 egg

1 cup Italian-seasoned bread crumbs

¼ cup grated parmesan cheese

Begin by washing the peppers, removing the stem ends, carefully scraping out the seeds with a knife and allowing to dry on a rack or paper towels placed in a plate.

Brown the sausage in a large skillet, working it into small chunks with a sturdy spatula. Drain and place to side.

In same skillet, coat bottom of pan with extra virgin olive oil and sauté onion for three to five minutes before adding garlic and sausage. Mix well sausage, onion, garlic and cheese with spatula. Pour ingredients into bowl.

Stuff peppers with sausage mixture, using a spoon. Do not over pack, as peppers can burst due to cooking heat.

In same skillet, add canola or vegetable oil for frying peppers. In separate dish, lightly beat egg. Dredge stuffed peppers in egg before coating in bread crumbs. Because of the smooth skin



Greg Freeman

Greg Freeman's Sausage-stuffed Sweet Peppers with Spaghetti alla Marinara and Sautéed Mushrooms

of the peppers, bread crumb coating consistency will vary from pepper to pepper. When oil in pan is hot (evident by its shimmer), gently add peppers to oil. Do not *drop* in hot oil. This can lead to burns. With a fork or metal spatula, turn peppers once brown on one side, making sure to turn away from oneself to avoid splatter of hot oil. Browning is relatively quick. Remove cooked peppers and allow to drain on paper towels before serving.

Inevitably, some sausage mixture will remain unused. This is great for use in omelets, stuffing baked potatoes or tossing with pasta.

Peter Piper Picked.....Well, you know!

If the idea of picking peppers in your own garden or from your own patio containers sounds appealing, consider planting Corno di Toro peppers. Bantam, Connecticut, USA-based [John Scheeper's Kitchen Garden Seeds](#) offers both Rosso (red) and Giallo (yellow) varieties, and one can have fruit-bearing plants in about 2 ½ months from sowing. Even if planted in mid-summer, the pepper plants could thrive into the fall in many climates, allowing gardeners to enjoy late season peppers when many others' plants have played out.

For more impatient gardeners, sweet banana pepper plants are to be had from big box store retailers and nursery specialists while supplies last.

Whether one chooses to grow peppers from seed or buy plants, or not grow peppers at all, this recipe for sausage-stuffed sweet peppers will hopefully provide an alternative way of using the otherwise ubiquitous sweet pepper. *Buon appetito!*



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Blueberries, Wisteria, Mountain Drives and Old Men

Years ago, it was customary for my parents and I to go on weekend drives, and occasionally we would visit the produce stand belonging to an old gentleman along U.S. 76 (west of Clayton, heading toward Hiawassee) in nearby Rabun County, Georgia. That stretch of 76 is beautiful to this day, but some newer homes have sprouted up on the hillsides and in the valley, contrasting with the pretty old farm houses and quaint, decadent shacks to which Jessica Tandy's character in the film *Foxfire* could have related.

Thinking of her own humble upbringing, Mom used to remark, "I bet there's been a lot of pots of beans cooked in that place," as we'd pass by a simple abode, left to succumb to kudzu and the elements, a place, no doubt, once abuzz with the laughter of children and the noise of simple mountain life.

As we would pull off the road to visit the old man with the produce stand, I would take note of the native trees clinging to the hillside across the road. They were festooned with tresses of blooming wisteria. It's funny how our visit was always around late May/early June, just in time for a front row seat for this dramatic view. Dad and the old man would talk about 'maters, greasy ("greezy") back beans and the like, and we'd leave with tomatoes and a little of whatever else the old guy had been able to secure at the farmers' market. Most important of all, we'd leave with my favorite: blueberries! After rambling in flea



Greg Freeman

For years now, one of my annual traditions has included preparing blueberry cornmeal muffins, using the recipe from the Old Mill Restaurant in Pigeon Forge, Tennessee. My journey of digital publishing began in 2006 with *Southern Edition*, a site devoted to the American South, and I still publish the site to this day and have gained quite a following. I have been aiming to revisit an article series I began years ago called "From Their Kitchen to Yours," and one of the restaurants that shared recipes with my readers early on was the Old Mill Restaurant. The Old Mill's marketing director was delighted to permit the publication of several of their fabulous recipes, including this blueberry cornmeal muffin recipe, which is a hit with all my guests:

<http://www.southernedition.com/FTKTYOldMillPigeonForge.html>

markets and perusing antiques stores, we'd return home, and Dad would get in the kitchen and get to work. He'd make blueberry muffins using those fresh berries, and I was in hog heaven.

One year, about this time of year, I got the hankering for blueberry muffins, and we took off to Rabun County. "You could have bought them closer to home," I'm sure you're thinking, but we were in it for the ride, the visit with the old man and the familiarity of the experience. That day, the produce stand was closed. Some weeks later, we returned, and it was still closed. We finally concluded that the old man had passed on. I felt a tinge of sadness. Dad had done all the produce buying and talking. I don't think I'd ever gotten out of the car, but it still saddened me. A nice old man in overalls and a ball cap was no longer there to entertain Dad, and something we enjoyed, not just berries but the overall experience, was no longer available to us. Time passed by, and we started getting blueberries from other places, but it was never quite the same.

Now Dad and Mom have passed on. Buying blueberries and going on mountain drives isn't the same anymore for me. In fact, I've only driven once to the Rabun County mountains since Mom has passed, and I merely drove through there *en route* to and from my 2022 Knoxville daffodil show. I don't take many leisurely drives anymore, and, at \$4+/gallon for gas at the moment, I don't want to. That said, I still buy blueberries every year, and I'm gonna keep making muffins, because doing so reminds me that Dad "told" Mom and me that he loved us every time he made them. He's been gone over two years, and tomorrow will make one year since Mom's passing. I'm going to enjoy a muffin or two, as I reminisce of our mountain drives of long ago.

*This article was originally published as Greg Freeman's personal Facebook post on May 27, 2022.

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WHEN DAD AND I WENT FISHIN'

buy it or stream it and take the kids fishing!

Greg Freeman

Photograph: *In Suspense*



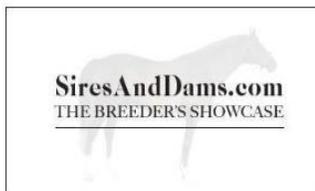
Greg Freeman (b. 1974), *In Suspense*, 2022, Digital Photograph.

Recalling the terrariums I maintained as a kid, and being inspired by the winning entry belonging to Iris Savage at the 2022 Atlanta Botanical Garden Flower Show, I took on a new terrarium project this spring. Utilizing a suspended, bulbous glass container (acquired from my local Hobby Lobby store), the micro environment consists of two different soil levels, divided by a decaying piece of moss- and lichen-laden bark placed horizontally. A stone collected from the property, along with a native fern (found in the front yard), a Venus flytrap (*Dionaea muscipula*) and a patch of native moss adorn the miniature landscape. The flytrap, in flower at the time of this photograph, had been purchased from [Marina's Botanicals](#) in Knoxville in March. My friends, Mark and Jennifer White, have two teenage daughters, Riley and Allissa, who enjoy visiting my Belgian draft mare, Sasha. They had expressed an interest in growing terrariums, and I used "weeds" in the front yard as a teaching opportunity, which is a good thing since Jennifer's Venus flytrap has already met its demise. Poor Jennifer. She kills 'em every time!

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In addition to being an avid gardener and daffodil hybridist, judge and exhibitor, Greg Freeman is an author, editor, recording artist, songwriter, amateur visual artist and life-long horse lover. His nonfiction writing on a number of subjects has appeared in magazines, encyclopedias and books of academic and scholarly interest, as well as [Southern Edition](#), Freeman's digital publication devoted to the American South. Published academic/encyclopedic contributions by Freeman include a chapter in Nadine Farghaly's edited volume, *Gender and the Modern Sherlock Holmes: Essays on Film and Television Adaptations Since 2009* (2015), as well as multiple entries in: *Race in American Film: Voices and Visions That Shaped a Nation* (2017), edited by Dr. Daniel Bernardi and Michael Green; *The British Empire: A Historical Encyclopedia* (2018), edited by Dr. Mark Doyle; and *Music around the World: A Global Encyclopedia* (2020), edited by Drs. Andrew R. Martin and Matthew Mihalka. In 2015, Freeman released a country music radio single, "Sunlight and Shadows," garnering international airplay, and his gospel music has received national exposure through television, radio and commercial recordings. His gospel EP, *Blessing and Blessing*, featuring guest vocalists Babbie Mason, a Grammy-nominated artist, and Gospel Music Hall of Famer Calvin Newton, released in December 2018. An owner of Belgian draft horses since 1987, Freeman's horse interests expanded into the world of Thoroughbred racing and breeding with the purchase of shares in Authentic in 2020. Authentic soon after won the Haskell Stakes, the Kentucky Derby and Breeders' Cup Classic before retiring to stud at Spendthrift Farm, Lexington, Kentucky, USA.

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