

Greg Freeman's Garden Chronicle



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On previous page...First introduced into the author's garden in November 2003, *Crocus vernus* 'Pickwick', a popular and very attractive flowering bulb, is a welcomed sight each year. Over time, ten bulbs have turned into lovely little clusters, of which one appears in this 2 March 2025 photograph.

Often this introduction begins with remarks about recent excessively cold or hot weather, as we all know that serves as an ice breaker for most conversations, albeit cliché. Still, for once, I can say that – while spring's arrival dragged its feet – it's been a beautiful time of year. Here in my neck of the woods in South Carolina, where we had been plagued with drought and wild fires, we have finally had abundant rain. And summer is off to a milder start...for now.

I made it to only one daffodil show this year, namely the Georgia Daffodil Society Flower Show at the Cathedral of St. Philip in Atlanta. My best flowers and the biggest part of my blooms arrived later. The Knoxville show was cancelled, and I was unable to make it to the Nashville show. That said, from limited entries I fared well in Atlanta, running second by one vote in the judging for Gold Ribbon (Best in Show).

Weeks later in April, I made a trip to Savannah to perform and lead worship for an Easter revival at the Savannah Baptist Center Church, where my friends Pastor Lucas and Naomi White minister in the city near the Section 8 housing. I met some very sweet people and thoroughly enjoyed the interaction.

I was put up in an Airbnb on Cypress Lake near Statesboro and had a lovely time. My days there allowed Lucas and me to catch up. Now in his 30s, Lucas is a minister, father, husband and a beautiful dreamer. I love his enthusiasm, boldness and lofty aspirations. To know that, to some extent, I mentored him when he was a youngster and that I played some part in shaping him into the great man he is today is very humbling, as I am sure he did not always see my best side. Still, standing before his congregation, he credited me as his greatest spiritual influence. To say I was touched is an understatement. I was further moved by his love and compassion for everyone he serves: the elderly, the homeless, the addicted. I am very proud of him and his family for their dedication.

Downtown Savannah was particularly welcoming. I could tell the azaleas had recently bloomed. Many spent blooms remained on the shrubs. Savannah, noted for its many squares, was verdant and colorful with abundant flowers gracing window boxes, streetside planters and hanging baskets. Lucas, Naomi and their sweet daughter, Nyema, and I had afternoon

tea *alfresco* at Gryphon across the street from shopSCAD, the Savannah College of Art and Design gift shop and just steps from Madison Square. A very handsome and delightful young man, Mohommad, was our waiter, and he made our experience a most pleasant and memorable one with his attentiveness and infectious enthusiasm.

While sipping tea and enjoying our petit fours, our conversation turned to the old trees gracing the squares. The stories they could tell...of surviving tropical storms, hurricanes and other calamities. As I looked toward Madison Square, I realized that a good-sized tree was actually an old and enormous crepe myrtle (*Lagerstroemia indica*). If those trees could talk...

During my limited time in Savannah and its environs, I ate very well and enjoyed the sights, sounds and culture of a city I had never visited before. When the Whites and I traversed the Talmadge Memorial Bridge to the property of the Westin Savannah Harbor Golf Resort and Spa, where we thought we might take in some great views of the downtown from that side of the river, we discovered that an Indian wedding was taking place at the Westin hotel with Downtown and the river as a backdrop. The women were beautifully adorned in their colorful saris, the men smartly attired in their traditional kurtas. I would have loved to have witnessed it all up close. Venturing back to Downtown, I was eager to go inside the DeSoto Hotel, a property owned by Sotherly Hotels of which I am – and let me add, a very minor – shareholder. Needless to say, it was a bustling place and wonderfully elegant and chic. I must stay – or at least dine – there some time!

Alas, it all came to a close much too quickly, and more than a month later I am now behind on gardening projects but have been savoring an enjoyable spring. I wish you all well as you pursue projects of your own this summer and fall. All the best and Happy Gardening!

Greg Freeman, Publisher

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Adventures of a Gardener Still Relevant After Thirty Years

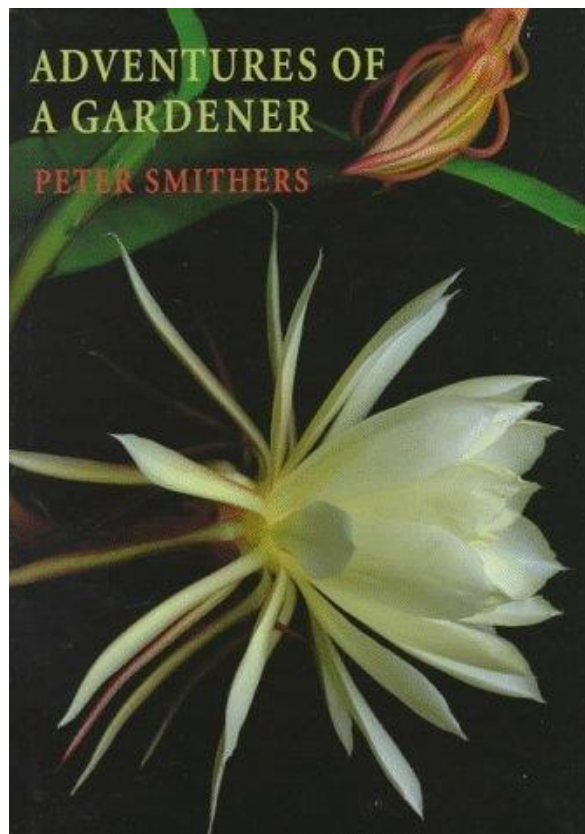
Of late – due to the recent daffodil season, I suppose – I have found myself continuing to lament the loss of my friend, Steve Vinisky (1953-2022), who encouraged me to become a daffodil judge, offered hybridizing insights and informed (and often entertained) me with stories of famed horticulturalists, daffodil hybridists and flower show exhibitors from around the globe. Now that Steve, who lived in the Portland, Oregon area, is no longer here to chat with me, I have few with whom I can talk to in-depth about my hybridizing aspirations. I have only one or two friends who genuinely “talk shop” on a variety of gardening topics, and that’s it! Yes, there are my non-serious gardening friends who think of daffodils as “those cute little yellow flowers” that emerge every spring, and, of course, I have fellow exhibitors who, gratefully, are very encouraging and equally enthusiastic, but I have yet to encounter another who could regale me with tales of Ireland’s J. Lionel Richardson (-1962) and his stable of daffodils and racehorses, or discuss details of a plant trade with the legendary Kath Dryden VMH (-2009), or share personal recollections of someone as captivating as Sir Peter Smithers VRD (1913-2006).

In fact, it was Steve Vinisky who urged me to seek out Sir Peter Smithers’ book, *Adventures of a Gardener*, a resource and memoir of sorts from which I have learned and shared bits of wisdom in garden lectures. The book, published by Harvill Press with the Royal Horticultural Society, was written when Sir Peter was an octogenarian.

Steve had shared with me that Sir Peter had worked alongside Ian



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Fleming (1908-1964) in intelligence during World War II, and in *Adventures* Sir Peter confirms this, stating, “A manly, handsome and romantic figure, and very rich, Ian was much admired by several young ladies but too busy to offer them more than passing though certainly exciting attention” (20). Steve always insisted that Sir Peter was the inspiration for Fleming’s James Bond spy novel series and the subsequent film adaptations. This sentiment has been echoed by others, including the *Financial Times* in its obituary for Smithers. In *Adventures*, like any great memoir, Sir Peter offers a smattering of name-dropping, even referencing artist Marc Chagall (1887-1985), acknowledging a time when they both resided at Paris’ Hôtel Vouillement prior to the German Occupation of France, and again in close proximity in Connecticut, USA. Sir Peter writes, “[Chagall] never greeted me in any other way but with a military salute” (15).

While Smithers would retire from the Royal Navy as a Lieutenant Commander, receive various diplomatic postings and go on to serve in Parliament before taking on various other distinguished roles of international consequence, it is his time at Vico Morcote in Ticino, Switzerland, that serves as much of the setting and inspiration for *Adventures of a Gardener*.

Sir Peter recounts the story behind his famous *Clivia x Kewensis* ‘Vico Yellow’. He shares dozens of his wonderful photographs taken at Vico Morcote. And, most significantly, he reveals a number of principles to which he adhered concerning his garden. I have shared some of these with my audiences.

Insistent that a garden should “be a source of pleasure to the owner and his friends, not a burden and an anxiety” (2), Sir Peter inadvertently points a finger at most American gardeners....myself included. Typically, American gardens are just lawns with flower beds that were too large to begin with or are neglected until they are difficult to manage. Sir Peter suggests that gardens “must therefore be designed and planted so as to reduce labour to a minimum, and the work involved must diminish as the owner grows old” (2). Plants are often purchased indiscriminately due to commercial hype and without research into their suitability in some locales. Sir Peter understood the importance of maximizing the use of space and maintained that “no plant is added to the garden if there is in existence an obtainable superior form” (3). Perhaps most important of all, he abided by a notion that many gardeners in my beloved American South have valued for generations, hence the spread of so many wonderful, timeless plants. Sir Peter’s words advocate for sharing plants, passing them along as one might say. One of my favorite quotes from his book and one that I frequently cite is stated thusly, “The pleasure of owning a fine plant is not complete until it has been given to friends” (3).

Yes, it has been thirty years since the publication of *Adventures of a Gardener*. Sir Peter himself has been gone from us for nearly twenty years. Even my friend Dr. Harold Koopowitz insists that Sir Peter Smithers’ famed yellow clivia has since been superseded. Still, I assert that this great book deserves a place in your library, that it is still inspiring and eye-opening and most definitely still relevant.

Smithers, Peter. *Adventures of a Gardener*. London: Harvill Press with the Royal Horticultural Society, 1995

“Sir Peter Smithers, model for 007, dies at 92.” *Financial Times*. Archives from the original on 11 December 2022. Retrieved 29 March 2025.

2024 American Daffodil Society Southeast Regional Flower Show Wins Award from Garden Club of Georgia

On the evening of 29 April 2025, I was pleasantly surprised to receive a text message from Georgia Daffodil Society Secretary Dr. Gale Thomas – who was in attendance at the Garden Club of Georgia Convention in Augusta – informing me that the 2024 American Daffodil Society Southeast Regional Flower Show, presented by the Georgia Daffodil Society and the North Georgia Council of Flower Show Judges, had won the prestigious Standard Flower Show Award for a Plant Society.

As faithful readers of my *Garden Chronicle* will recall, the 2024 ADS Southeast Regional Show was held at the beautiful Johns Creek Baptist Church in Alpharetta, an Atlanta suburb. I am particularly proud of this award, because the 2024 show marked the first occasion on which I had chaired a show, although I must admit it was not carried out single-handedly. Many people had a hand in its success, and I am delighted that our hard work paid off!

I had insisted on having the show evaluated for possible awards and wound up submitting a book of evidence in the Flower Show Award for Plant Society category only.

A great deal of hard work and attention to detail is essential if a garden club or plant society is to win such awards. That said, I think it reflects well on a club when it takes its events seriously enough to pursue such awards. I am thrilled with this win and could not be more pleased with my fellow Georgia Daffodil Society members for playing their part in making the 2024 show an award-winning success. A proud moment, indeed.



Lesley Kirkpatrick

Pictured is the author with the Plant Society Flower Show Award and ribbon from the Garden Club of Georgia for the 2024 American Daffodil Society Southeast Regional Show presented by the Georgia Daffodil Society, North Georgia Council of Flower Show Judges and the Dogwood District.



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2025 Georgia Daffodil Society Flower Show Finds New Home

After being held at the Chattahoochee Nature Center in the Atlanta suburb of Roswell for more than a decade before moving to the Johns Creek Baptist Church, also just outside Atlanta, in 2024, the Georgia Daffodil Society Flower Show was held in 2025 at the beautiful Cathedral of St. Philip in the heart of Buckhead, the decidedly affluent and trendy part of Atlanta.

The show was very well attended by the public, thanks – in large part – to the adjacent Peachtree Road Farmers Market, which draws members of the community to the church's grounds every Saturday from spring until winter.

Jaydee Ager, who co-chaired the show with me, served as the Horticulture Judges' Chair, and all of our judges were from out of state, including Dr. Janet Hickman, immediate past president of the American Daffodil Society, who presented a delightful program on historic daffodils.

With exhibitors from multiple states, the show offered an array of high quality exhibits, and the design and photography divisions sparked much interest among attendees.

With judging taking place on Friday, 7 March, the show was a bit early for my best daffodils, as many of them did not bloom until the following week or later. That said, I had several winners, most notably my seedling GSF-10A-17-01 ('Katrina Rea' x Koopowitz seedling HK2-08), which won the Rose Ribbon (Best Standard Seedling in Show) and, for the second time, was defeated for the Gold Ribbon (Best in Show) winner by one vote. My congratulations goes to Ross Hornsby, the current American Daffodil Society Southeast Region Vice President and an enthusiastic exhibitor and hybridist. His entry of 'Lima's Winter Morning' was the top flower in the show, marking the first time Ross has taken the Gold Ribbon. We were all very happy for him and this great accomplishment.

I was also particularly happy for my friend, Mrs. Paula Karrh, who arrived with copious amounts of the double historic cultivar, 'Erlicheer'. Her stems had many florets and deciding which ones to enter proved challenging for Paula, whose garden overall was decimated by Hurricane Helene last year. Nonetheless, Paula had the Best Historic Three Stems with 'Erlicheer'



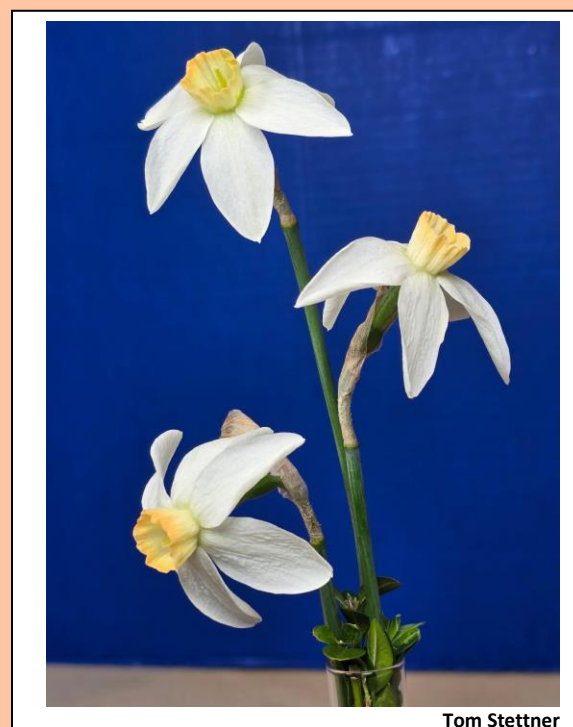
Betsy Abrams

Georgia Daffodil Society Member Betsy Abrams provided the Cathedral Flower Guild with fresh daffodils for arrangements prepared for the Sunday preceding Lent.

and informed me, following the show, that her children have assured that her garden will be restored and they will see to it that she is able to thoroughly enjoy it once again. Paula is a delightful person, always displaying nothing but kindness to everyone and expressing heartfelt enthusiasm for my successes. I am thrilled that her children desire to help her restore her old and well-established garden to some semblance of its original splendor. No doubt, it will be one of the shining glories of Swainsboro, the Georgia town where she resides.

Jaydee Ager dominated the miniatures section, somewhat reminding me of our sweet friend, the late Betty Hartzog, who used to be *the* exhibitor to beat with miniatures. Jaydee's winning entries included collections and containers, a testament to her newfound niche. Many standard daffodils do not thrive in her South Georgia milieu, and Jaydee has stumbled upon what works for her. All of her entries were exemplary, and her many wins were well-deserved.

Following are photographs of some of the show's winners.



The author's entry. First in class with the lower left bloom taking the Rose Ribbon (Best Standard Seedling in Show) and becoming contender for Gold Ribbon, beaten by Ross Hornsby's 'Lima's Winter Morning'.



Tom Stettner

'Angelina', exhibited by Dr. Janet Hickman, was the Miniature Gold Ribbon Winner (miniature Best in Show).



Tom Stettner

Paula Karrh's three stems of 'Erlicheer', the beautiful historic double from New Zealand, won the Best Historic Three Stems in the show.



Tom Stettner

'Chile Verde', an exciting small-cupped cultivar bred by Robert Spotts of California, was the Best Intermediate in the show, exhibited by Ross Hornsby.



Caroline Silcox Passes at 88

On the afternoon of 15 May 2025, I received word from fellow Georgia Daffodil Society members Bonnie Campbell and Jaydee Ager that our friend, Caroline Silcox, had passed. She was 88.

A resident of Gainesville, the North Georgia city on beautiful Lake Lanier, Caroline had been married to Dr. Daniel Hal Silcox Jr. (1934-2022) for nearly sixty-five years at the time of his passing. Throughout the years, she distinguished herself in garden club circles, eventually joining the Georgia Daffodil Society and taking a keen interest in judging daffodils. She was president of the Garden Club of Georgia (2011-2013) and especially active in her district.

Caroline was so dedicated to garden club involvement that she and four other fellow garden club members made news after they found themselves stuck in metro Atlanta traffic for twenty-five hours amidst a winter storm while returning home from a garden club meeting in Marietta, a drive that even with heavy traffic would normally take much less than two hours. Recounting the experience to Jeff Gill, reporter for *The Times*, Gainesville's newspaper, Caroline acknowledged that the experience had been a scary one but she managed to chuckle about it. This was the same snow storm that made national headlines. Atlanta, like most cities in the American South, rarely has significant snowfall, and the snow removal equipment necessary to make interstates and other thoroughfares – which are already heavily traveled – reasonably passable during a snow event simply is not there.

I will fondly remember Caroline, both her kindness and her love for daffodils. We became accredited American Daffodil Society judges along about the same time, if I remember correctly. She was enthusiastic about daffodils, frequently complimenting the flowers she judged and constantly looking for the good in every exhibit. Caroline and I judged together on one or two occasions, and she was an absolute pleasure to work with. She made a lasting impression in the realm of Georgia garden clubs and she was an asset to the Georgia Daffodil Society. She will be missed.



Caroline Romberg Silcox

Gill, Jeff. "Winter storm turns into adventure for 5 Hall women." *The Times* (Gainesville), 29 January 2014. <https://www.gainesvilletimes.com/news/winter-storm-turns-into-adventure-for-5-hall-women/> Accessed 16 May 2025.

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Photograph: *Statesboro Amaryllis*



Greg Freeman (b. 1974), *Statesboro Amaryllis*, 2025, digital photograph

On my recent trip to Savannah, I was privileged to stay at a charming Airbnb property right on the bank of Cypress Lake near Statesboro. Owned by Miss Barbara, a sweet lady who resides next door, the entire property captivated me with its idyllic natural surroundings as well as its beautiful flowers and meticulously planted beds. Barbara's dedication to her garden from morning to evening was evident. One morning, I saw her next door planting some bedding plants, and I walked over to compliment her row of *Hippeastrum* x *johnsonii*, a bulb of which I wrote about in the April 2017 issue of *Greg Freeman's Garden Chronicle*, titled "A Watchmaker's Timeless Flower." Known widely as hardy amaryllis, the flowering bulb has become a fixture in gardens of the American South where it often grows in lush, glossy clumps and makes lovely rows such as the one seen above alongside Miss Barbara's residence. Easily confused with its offspring *Hippeastrum* 'Ackermanii', the bulb dates to 1799 and was reportedly the first *Hippeastrum* hybrid. Both cultivars are tough as nails and generally thrive in spite of cold winters.

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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. Freeman's nonfiction writing on a number of subjects has appeared in magazines, encyclopedias and books of academic and scholarly interest, as well as his various websites, including [Southern Edition](#), his 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 global exposure through television broadcasts, radio airplay and commercial recordings, including the Collingsworth Family's GMA Dove Award-nominated album, *Just Sing!* (2021), on which his song, "I Owe You Everything," appears. His gospel EP, *Blessing and Blessing* (2018), features guest vocalists Babbie Mason, a Grammy-nominated artist, and Gospel Music Hall of Famer Calvin Newton. 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. Additionally, in 2023, Freeman acquired the proven Belgian draft sire and show champion, Remlap DVP, a son of Remlap Constance Edie Johnne, a broodmare extraordinaire and undefeated show winner. Remlap DVP was bred by noted breeder Beth Palmer, Tottenham, Ontario, Canada, and named to honor her late father, the illustrious horseman, Douglas Victor Palmer.

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