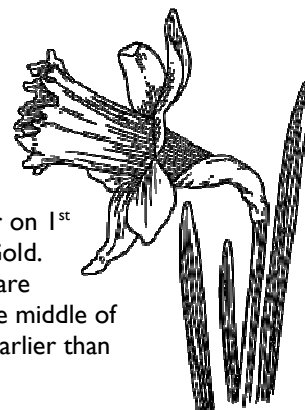


## Spring flowers

We have lived in quite a variety of locations in the UK and wherever we've lived I've always looked forward to the time when the daffodils flowered. In places such as Peterborough and Newcastle, vast swathes of planted daffodils bloom on the embankments of bypasses and ring roads and are a fine sight in April. But I always wondered why the Welsh celebrated St Davids day with daffodils, since daffodils were not in flower on 1<sup>st</sup> March, apart from the early dwarf varieties such as Snipe and February Gold. Of course, when we moved to Pembrokeshire I found out that daffodils are indeed in bloom on 1<sup>st</sup> March – in fact the first ones are usually out in the middle of February, sometimes even earlier. This is a good month, even 6 weeks, earlier than Newcastle.



In our garden here the first to bloom are the Tenby daffodils – apparently these are very similar to wild daffodils except the trumpet and petals are the same colour. Also early are what I believe are a very double version of wild daffodils – the flowers have multiple trumpets which often split and look a bit messy and complicated – but I like them as they are so tough and reliable. They must be an old garden variety as we have lived in several houses where they grew all over the garden. Also we always have white jonquils out very early, which seems most odd!

But in contrast to our early daffodils, the snowdrops seem late – I feel they ought to bloom at least a month earlier than the daffodils whereas they actually bloom almost at the same time. Also they bloom no earlier, in fact maybe later, than in other parts of the country. I think this must be because the two plants are reacting to different triggers – snowdrops seem to like a proper winter so that once the worst is over they stick their heads up very quickly, even through snow. But they don't often get a proper winter here – so get a bit confused. Whereas daffodils probably just react to the warming soil temperature.

And then, in a typical mild spring, a few primroses are always out with the daffodils, and carry on in dribs and drabs for months. It has been noticeable, though, that after the colder winters of 2010 and 2011 the primroses came out all in a big rush once the weather improved and put on an amazing display.

Outside our gardens there is not much in flower yet – just a few celandines, daises and dandelions. But the Alexanders are beginning to shoot up – it will only be few weeks before the hedgebanks are bordered with their glossy leaves and yellow flower heads and decorated with the white foamy mats of scurvy grass.

*Rosemary Royle*