

The Artist's Almanac

March 2005

.....*daffodils,*
That come before the swallow dares, and take
The winds of March with beauty
-Shakespeare

They are so common we take them for granted, these little fellows. Yet their gold trumpets herald spring's parade, and a thick field of them, as at the old Comer mansion, is an awesome sight in March.

Once planted they require no care or feeding, and nothing feeds on them. Only close regular mowing will starve them or a rank thatch of weeds smother them. A half-tended yard at an old farmhouse will bloom for a century or more after a long-forgotten farm wife plants beauty there to cheer her rough life.

We welcome the first fistful from a granddaughter. Later comes the gaudy forsythia, but by then, having enough of yellow, we collect the elegant japonica, with its oriental branches and vermilion splendor. Spectacular tulips follow and the roses get their first pruning.

Spring lasts but a couple of weeks here - a month at most. In a whirlwind courtship, she teases us with a glimpse of color and a bit of perfume. Then, before we know it, wool becomes intolerable and we are into our cottons. Sweat salts our eyes and we are hoeing, mowing and ruing too much sowing.

Uncle Alf once told me the proverb was backwards - March comes in like a lamb and goes out like a lion. He was often contrary and of strong opinion, yet such is often the case, with warmth and early blooms at the beginning and a wet blanket of snow at the end.

A blanket of snow doesn't bother daffodils, but a late frost will doom this year's fruit crop. Pear, cherry, and even apples - warmed into exuberance by fickle spring mourn their losses with blackened blooms.

Daffodils challenge the artist. They stand stiffly in a vase and are stubborn models, rearranging themselves the moment the painter's back is turned, like the gawky adolescents they are.

I prefer them where they grow, in a wildflower garden not yet gloomed in green, backlit by the low rays of a spring afternoon, pure yellow light against dark green cedars and the umber of winter woods. They give us the good news - despite the worst that winter can do, the sun has won once more.

Visit our website later, for a number of new watercolors,
And our booth at The Gallatin Junior Service League's

Art In Bloom

Saturday, March 5, 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.

Maple Center, 393 Maple Street, Gallatin (across from Post Office)