

Daffodil Hill – a vibrant springtime tradition



A variety of daffodils stand tall on the first day of spring. Photo/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

VOLCANO – Life and death all in a matter of weeks. Mother Nature can be cruel that way.

While the blooms of Daffodil Hill had clearly passed their peak on the first full day of spring, by March 21 the iconic outpost in Amador County was closed for the season.

It has been a tough few years for the McLaughlin family. Between drought and inopportune rains, the flowers have struggled to last for long. They are a seasonal bulb that can

decorate a landscape for several weeks, assuming the weather cooperates. In good years Daffodil Hill is open from mid-March to mid-April, seven days a week.



Paths wonder between the fields of daffodils. Photo/Kathryn Reed

This 540-acre ranch has been in the same family since 1887. Seven of those acres are full of daffodils. Each fall family members and friends plant more bulbs, with 11 varieties put in the ground in 2015: Arkle, Barrett Browning, Bravoure, Delibes, Flaconet, Green Eyed, Ice Follies, King Alfred, Love Call, Ringtone and Yellow River.

According to the American Daffodil Society, "Depending on which botanist you talk to, there are between 40 and 200 different daffodil species, subspecies or varieties of species and over 25,000 registered cultivars (named hybrids) divided among the 13 divisions of the official classification system."



Different species are planted each fall. Photo/Kathryn Reed

One thing that makes Daffodil Hill so special is that the family – now in its sixth generation – does all this work for the public to enjoy for free. There is no cost to walk the grounds, marvel at all the species. It doesn't even cost to park. Donations and the sale of souvenirs pay for the 8,000 to 16,000 bulbs that are planted each year.

Kim Grady, a fifth generation family member, said it was her grandparents' and parents' desire to have this little hill be open for all to see – to never charge. Donations dictate how many bulbs are planted each fall. Family members pay attention to what has bloomed well and spots that need filling in to help determine which varieties to buy.



Old farm equipment and some of the original buildings are scattered about. Photo/Kathryn Reed

Daffodils were already on the property when Arthur and Lizzie McLaughlin bought the land from Dutchman Pete Denzer. They continued to operate it as a way station for people traveling over the Carson Pass. When she died in 1935 family members planted daffodils in her memory. Each year the tradition continued.

Now it is also a tradition for many to make the trek to Daffodil Hill. Some days 4,000 people will walk the grounds to see these yellow, white and orange flowers.



Plan to visit Daffodil Hill in 2017. Photo/Kathryn Reed

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