



American Daffodil Society (ADS)

2020 Fall Forum – Assessment

November 30, 2020

Survey Coordinator: Susan Duncan

Survey Creator: Kirby Fong

Data Analyst: R.W. Duncan

Abstract:

Background: The 2020 Fall Forum was the first virtual event for the American Daffodil Society. Given the uncertainty of the COVID-19 worldwide situation, we are not sure when we will be able to convene physically again. We will be holding our 2021 National Convention virtually as well.

Objective: To identify what we did well and what we needed to improve, from the viewpoint of our event participants, for a satisfying virtual event experience.

Method: The survey was available on-line at the end of the event. Participants filled out the form and returned it via email or mail.

Results: Evidence is overwhelming that The Fall Forum was a successful endeavor. To begin with, 243 members signed up to participate and seventy-four (74) surveys were returned yielding a significant statistical sample (30%) from which to draw. Those numbers are higher than those achieved in our previous physical events. Many people also shared thoughtful comments of satisfaction and/or for improvements.

Conclusions: The Daffodil Journal is the main line of communication to reach most of our ADS members, then followed by on-line contact. Comments indicated personal invitation is also prevalent. ZOOM worked well for the most participants. The Board Meeting was fine. Forum topics were well attended and very well received. Future forum participation looks to be well attended either as a virtual or physical event with up to 30% of respondents desirous of having both a physical component and a virtual component.

Approach:

The received surveys were first compiled and the results tabulated for each survey question. Then the research began to analyze the results and to collect and compile comments against each of the areas. Almost all of the questions yielded some pertinent information and insight into how to make future forums as good as this one was.

Forum Assessment:

The 2020 ADS Fall Forum was conducted on several days from September 12 through November 8, 2020. It was conducted via the ZOOM application due to a raging COVID-19 Pandemic. Submission of photographs for the virtual photography show began August 2. Three separate Introduction to Zoom sessions were held August 26, 27, and September 9, 2020. There were two ADS Online Bulb Auctions on eBay and one live ZOOM auction. This report captures the results of a post forum survey intended to provide the leadership and membership a view of the successes and areas of potential improvement.

By any measure from the survey results, which will be presented in following paragraphs, the Fall Forum was a successful endeavor. Of the 243 members signed up to participate, seventy-four (74) returned surveys. This yielded a significant statistical sample (30%) to draw from.

SUCCESS

Success, as measured by the volume of responses expressing that the forum Exceeded Expectations, was 74%. Met Expectations was 47%. These numbers are supported by a number of comments:

- *What a wonderful job the entire group of ADS members and officers did in creating and managing the Fall Forum. Thanks to all who invested so much time and energy.*
- *Many thanks for the team that made it all possible. Wonderful effort and beautifully executed.*
- *A big thanks to everyone for putting these events together. Your hard work is much appreciated.*
- *More of the same especially connecting us all with the mentors and Grand Masters of the daffodil world.*
- *The other virtual conference I attended had roughly the same number of presentations but was about 4 times as expensive.*
- *I thought the variety of topics and quality of the speakers was very good. I've never been to a Fall meeting. I was happy to be able to attend. I enjoyed the whole thing.*
- *Many thanks to all for a Fantastic Fall Forum. Amazing for their first presentation for so many days.*
- *I was amazed with the amount of time, effort, skill and love of daffodils that had to have gone into planning such a well-done fall forum. I learned much about daffodils and Zoom. I must admit that I was extremely intrigued with the thoughts of a Zoom forum and I wanted to learn more about Zoom. Every aspect exceeded my expectations.*
- *It just kept getting better and better with each presentation.*
- *Everything about the meeting was outstanding except the beginning of the judges' refresher. That was painful.*
- *Much better. Great work by a number of folks. It wasn't perfect but was almost too good! Whoever works on the next one has a tough job ahead to live up to the expectations this one will have created.*
- *The Fall meeting is excellent on-line. It could strengthen all of our local Societies and all of ADS Regions with careful planning.*
- *Many of the policies and practices created for Fall Forum 2020 will serve well for virtual meetings in the future. The virtual format has also made participation and presentation by folks outside the U.S. much more feasible and affordable.*

- *First off, and there's nowhere else to, say this, I thought the lineup was amazing, especially as a first event, never tried before, with a bunch of old farts like us. Kudos to Lynn Slackman who was behind every door and propping up people behind the scenes. The ideas were fun and exciting, but the execution was brilliant.*
- *I signed up for a few sessions. but only actually viewed the recorded judge's refresher course which was excellent.*
- *The forum was fabulous: great speakers, content and smooth process.*
- *I believe the fall forum proved to exceed and deliver what was expected and we were able to see each other.*
- *Production team did an incredible job. Jaydee, Lynn, Greg, Ben, Nancy, Fred, et. al. are heroes.*
- *Great speeches and topics – Fun to socialize a bit at the end of the sessions.*
- *I thought the Virtual Fall Forum was outstanding. I like the way it was spread out over several weeks, I enjoyed all the speakers, and I was grateful that some sessions were recorded so that I could watch them on my schedule.*
- *Jaydee did such a fantastic job that it would be difficult to match this event! She set the bar high. Special thanks to Lynn and Frank as well.*

COMMUNICATION

Communications and presentations actually came in two flavors. The first 'flavor,' is how to notify ADS members. The second 'flavor' of communication is how people were able to participate. In regard to notification, the most effective was the ADS Journal (49%) followed by the DaffNet (34%), Regional Newsletters (27%), ADS Chimp (27%) and BODnet (20%). The Journal, and other related societies' journals/newsletters would appear to be the most effective means of advertising. Some of the comments were

- *Jaydee called me to be a presenter.*
- *E-mails other than mail Chimp*
- *Asked to be a member of the Production Team*
- *Fred and Jaydee contacted me to help with the virtual Fall Forum*
- *Well informed through emails from the executive director and forum organizers*
- *I think the information was also posted on the Garden Club of Virginia website.*
- *Jaydee*
- *Received forwarded email from local daffodil society*
- *As RVP of Mid-Atlantic Region, I sent info to membership*
- *As an ADS Board member, I knew of this event from inception.*
- *Lynn Ladd forwarded the ADS email and encouraged members of the East TN Daffodil Society to participate.*
- *I was invited by Susan Duncan*
- *From ADS website*

ZOOM ACCESSIBILITY

How people were able to participate was covered by questions 3 and 5. 95% of survey respondents were registered for the event and 80% of those used a computer with microphone and speakers for ZOOM sessions. The other 5% were organizers, presenters or photo show entrants only. Some people refreshed themselves on ZOOM (53%) for a better experience. In all cases the Audio and Video were clear with 84% and 89%, respectively, from respondents. Comments included:

- *I had difficulty connecting for the youth presentations but resolved it by installing a personal copy of ZOOM.*
- *I had Wi-Fi connectivity problems which were resolved with an additional cable.*
- *Very few issues considering the many sessions*
- *Audio 'garbling' but that has happened occasionally with a lot of ZOOM calls I've been on. I've seen someone's video freeze on calls a few times, too.*
- *The orientation session was great as I knew basically nothing. Those in charge were extremely patient with all participants and any issues.*
- *It's a good platform.*
- *It is also possible to use for small breakout sessions which would be an excellent way to reconnect and advance the ADS programs. The planning committee might continue to monitor developments in this area. Now it is very dynamic.*
- *Because of COVID-19, every child in the local school district was mandated to attend classes from home on Chromebooks, so there was extraordinary demand on local internet services. I had to seek out other internet services and sites than my own.*
- *Sometimes it would "hang up," but not a big problem.*
- *This week we had a meeting of the RHS Bulb Committee with ZOOM. I was able to join the meeting with the help of our grandchild.*
- *The biggest problem is learning where to find what you need (mute, chat, etc.) on YOUR device—they are all different.*
- *Everything worked perfectly.*
- *I felt quite 21st century using ZOOM, and wanted to Thank You for pulling me in, kicking and screaming, maybe, but I did it successfully.*

FUTURE FALL FORUMS

It's difficult to present 'The Future' without knowing what environment will be present. Never-the-less, the returned surveys certainly provide some strong hints on what the membership would like to see considered.

First question, should a Fall Forum be conducted? Simple answer is a resounding 'YES.' The survey shows that a virtual-only meeting would meet the needs of 51% of respondents with an 'in person' meeting desired by 62%. Thus, a combination of

physical and virtual would appeal to the largest set of the membership. Comments on this topic were:

- *I miss the direct contact with people and obviously there's no substituting the touch, feel of real daffodils but the virtual platform made for a very approachable situation.*
- *I know I will not be traveling to Reno next year, so I hope that you have at least some virtual if not all of it. Also, I've never been to a National Convention and am looking forward to the Virtual Convention next spring. The speaker lineup sounds great.*
- *I really enjoyed the informal chat times before and after the sessions. Perhaps include more of these in the future*
- *ZOOM meetings are all very good and enjoyable but they do not really compensate for meetings where one is also aware of other peoples' body language, nevertheless they are excellent when people cannot afford to travel because of expense or epidemic.*
- *I enjoy attending the conventions and the fall forums to see daffodil friends as well as the flowers, the presentations and, if time, some of the surrounding area.*
- *An important use of our web-based approach would be to rigorously design each meeting toward a strategic ADS goal.*
- *Survey should be ready for distribution ASAP following the close of the forum.*

LECTURES, PRESENTATIONS AND JUDGES' REFRESHER

Participants enjoyed the presentations being spread out to different days by 84%, even though 15% wish the time span was shorter.

- *Really enjoyed the presentations.*
- *This was a great way to do a judge's refresher and so much more convenient. Please do it again!*
- *Having the sessions recorded was great.*
- *Timing of some sessions was difficult for European or Australian participation.*
- *I would like an overall shorter time span.*
- *I think it is ridiculous having a ZOOM meeting that goes on month after month like the recent forum. Rather quarterly meetings – one in the summer and one in the winter – when we do not have our regular Spring and Fall meetings. This is assuming we can have in person meetings again in the spring and fall – maybe that will be in 2022? At those quarterly meetings two presentations would be sufficient. Many of us are in other plant groups as well and ZOOM meetings are not unusual – some plant societies have monthly ZOOM meetings. We do have other calls on our time as well.*
- *Times on Saturdays are a little tough as they conflict with other events.*
- *Other than seeing my Daff friends, in person, I got more from the Virtual Fall Forum than ones I've physically attended.*

- *Using the online sessions to reach out to other plant related groups and other interest groups presents an important new source for the ADS.*
- *A series of ongoing articles/photo essays/how-tos can build our society and its outreach & effectiveness.*
- *Maybe it's an idea to make the meetings a little bit more interactive. That makes it a lot more fun to listen and be concentrated.*
- *My biggest challenge was trying to fit in the various times scheduled with my life. If there's any way to condense them I could then block out certain time on my calendar.*

SESSION RECORDING

One of the topics that was explored was the session recording. The survey implied that this was a low value activity. However, given the comments from participants this was a false conclusion and provides additional flexibility for the membership. Although 53% of respondents did not view any of the recordings, 22% viewed at least one due to convenience and 30% viewed one or more to review what was presented or because they forgot to attend a session. Comments:

- *Those with high educational or historical value should be archived for indefinite future use.*
- *I was glad I could watch the recording because the info was really good.*
- *I didn't understand how to replay the first recording that I missed.*
- *Some sessions were held at times that just did not work for me and I really wanted to participate...having them available for 10 days was very much appreciated.*
- *Great idea! Time constraint on my part.*
- *I didn't know where to find or how to get to these recordings.*
- *I would wish they'd be available always instead of a limited time.*
- *The ability to view them could have been longer than 10 days.*
- *I missed a judge's refresher and then forgot to check if it had been recorded. I think all sessions SHOULD be recorded.*
- *Recording the sessions is critical to getting and expanding participation.*
- *It would help to have them available for a longer period of time.*
- *Why a 10-day cut-off?*
- *Very convenient to utilize.*
- *Please keep recording!*

Because of the many comments regarding the 10-day recording availability, we inquired and received the further explanation for the time limitations. It was not decided lightly and had much discussion to fulfill these goals:

- To ensure access for all paid registrants to accommodate their schedule conflicts or overseas time zones;
- To avoid copyright issues, even with other safeguards in place;
- To utilize data storage capacity within appropriate limits.

With these goals in mind, the decision was made not to permanently archive any of the sessions.

BULB AUCTION

As a principal fundraiser, the auction was successful. 41% of respondents indicated that they had participated. Photographs were deemed clear by at least half of the participants. The comments were:

- *Good visual presentation.*
- *A bit clumsy for some of us but was easily worked out and fair.*
- *Some bidders weren't able to raise or lower their hands or didn't know how. This seemed to work okay in the orientation session I attended. Perhaps 'would be' bidders should be encouraged to attend an orientation session where they'd practice raising and lowering their hands.*
- *There seemed to be a lag time between when you clicked on the icon and when it would take effect that was causing some difficulty.*
- *I watched the live auction to learn how a ZOOM auction would be conducted. I did not intend to purchase anything, although it was tempting. My daffodil growing is hit and miss, and I did not want the responsibility of bidding on a special bulb that might not survive under my care nor in my zone.*
- *The auction is evolving. I liked how some vocalized instead of raising their hand. It made it seem like a live auction.*
- *Janet did a fabulous job with the live auction and was quick to change the process when the 'hand raising' didn't work as practiced.*
- *It was very well done.*
- *I did buy on EBAY but the way to purchase was confusing but doable.*
- *I made a purchase but was annoyed at the time as I was unable to get my hand down.*

PHOTOGRAPHY SHOW

The daffodil show appeared to mirror what has been observed at in-person events. That is to say, of the respondents to the survey, the participation level in 'the show' appeared to be on the order of 26% with 36% of respondents expressing no opinion of 'the show.' People were definitely interested in the show results with 41% indicating that they watched the presentation of awards. Comments on the show were:

- *Absolutely wonderful!*
- *Fantastic component of Fall Forum! Organizers are due much thanks.*
- *Very good job by all.*
- *Amazing! What a wonderful spectrum of participants and subjects.*
- *Good addition to the meeting!*
- *I liked the show.*
- *The Photography Show was very elegant and sophisticated, and very much worth all the time taken to build the software platform.*

- *The amount of time and effort spent in creating the photography show was amazing. Kudos to all involved.*
- *I watched the presentation, which was fun because we got to see the main photos and the photographers and there was time for several entrants to discuss their images and/or composition process.*
- *The number of submitted photos, 560, was way beyond original expectations.*
- *The result of 3 ways to view the show was a fun surprise: all photos, judged awards, people's choice.*
- *The idea of leaving the gallery up through the Thanksgiving Holiday was exceptional for sharing with friends and family.*
- *Didn't spend hours viewing all the photos but the ones I did view were really good.*
- *I viewed all of the photos but never figured out if and how my votes were being registered, or whether I needed to sign in to vote, so I voted for some but never resolved my concerns.*
- *I now know how to submit photos. I like the internet format for making submissions.*
- *We need to train some new 'Virtual Photography Show Chairs.' This would be a way for people to learn about each of the different types of photo contests the ADS plans as 'Judged Show,' People's Choice' and a 'Physical Photo Show.'*
- *I found the site not easy to use for uploading photos as it would not happen from my photo program.*
- *I noticed at the end that there were more classes than announced at the start. It would have been nice to have all those classes in advance to encourage people to enter more photos unless it was the intention to limit the number of entries and subdivide only if necessary.*
- *Some people entered more than the limit (2) for the number of photos in a class. [There should have been a software limit on photographer and entry]. The Photo Contest Team tried to remedy this rule violation by attempting to be sure a photographer didn't have more than 2 photos in a subdivided class. This made for some odd groupings.*
- *The winners presentation needs its own session. Pairing it with the closing reception didn't work.*
- *I'd like to see all the photos in a series with the winners leading the series. I'd enjoy seeing the winners and all the photos in the class together rather than having to click thru a series of separate winners and then all the others. This is much easier than a 'live' photo show.*
- *I found that my photos were moved to different classes, and it took me awhile to find them.*
- *I didn't receive a confirmation, so I wasn't sure if my entry was successful (later found it on the site).*

- *Entering the Photography show could have been much easier by using WUFOO for instance. The whole photo show was way too complicated.*
- *It would have been nice if Robert had mentioned some of the statistics during the presentation session, i.e., number of classes, number of entries, etc.*
- *I couldn't find the link to the photography classes.*
- *At first, I thought the 3 or so winners were all there were, and it wasn't until I looked through the whole thing that I discovered I had won 2 Blue ribbons.*

BOARD MEETING

The Board of Director's (BoD) meeting had very few comments. It appeared to be conducted as most of the respondents expected. 55% of respondents listened to the meeting. 38% felt business conduct was 'good.' 24% felt there were fewer comments and 27% noticed an absence of objections. It is unclear what the ADS considers to be the 'nature' of the BoD meeting and that should influence planning for this as part of future forums. Comments to improve the actual board meeting include:

- *Some back and forth should be encouraged*
- *The ability of ZOOM to engage folks who have been long ADS members but not regulars at meetings strengthens the society.*
- *A series of Regional ZOOM conversations working to connect ALL members in an ADS Region could attract more activity and forward effectiveness. A focus on these Regional Reports in a positive way would engage more interest in the Annual Meetings. Reports are often are slight and can be referred to be read, however, if a theme were focused, the reports would support a theme and might encourage discussion and involvement.*
- *The Board was very willing and cooperative in accepting different ways to conduct business in the virtual format. They also readily accepted the change to parliamentary procedure, particularly in Voting by General Consent.*
- *This is an evolving process. I think we were all just getting our feet wet. I think this will become more comfortable in the future.*
- *I thought it was very effective. More of us attended, I believe.*
- *If there is a controversial motion at future ZOOM meetings, you'll have to instruct board members how to vote.*
- *I very much liked how the Board Meeting was conducted.*
- *Maybe there should be a unified theme for the board meeting and the talks/presentations.*
- *It took a little getting used to but was fine in the end. Had I needed to make an objection, I'm sure I would have found a way of letting everyone know!*

FORUM TOPICS

The survey contained seventeen (17) potential topics that could be covered by additional sessions. The top five (5) topics were: Tulips, snowdrops, colchicums, other perennials (35%); Pests and diseases (34%); Attracting Birds and wildlife (32%);

Butterflies (32%) and Composting and soil improvement (30%). There many comments on this topic:

- *I get information on non-daffodil topics elsewhere so prefer daffodil-related programming for ADS events.*
- *Would like to stay with topics about daffodils.*
- *Daffodil information only*
- *We could let our members know about other groups doing video presentations, but such would get away from daffodil growing.*
- *If ADS takes on other topics, it is important those topics don't overshadow our daffodil presentations.*
- *More rigorous conversations on integrating daffodils into a multitude of different landscapes from natural, native, to modern design.*
- *Conversations on daffodils and protecting and compensating for their dormancy in any garden design*
- *Adventures and history with daffodils*
- *My interest in ADS is for daffodil topics.*
- *Beginners guide to hybridizing as I have heard from newbies they would like to know how.*
- *Panel discussion of how judges from different countries have rules that are different for entering and judging daffodils*
- *Suggestions: Virtual tours of ADS display gardens; ADS members' daffodil plantings; Keukenhof and the Horis Bulborum in the Netherlands; Daffodil and companion plantings in botanical gardens.*
- *Planting methods for different styles of growing daffodils, e.g., small lots, larger acreage, potted grow tunnels, raised beds.*
- *Planting challenges in growing daffodils, e.g., regional locations, soil types, weather issues, soil improvement resources...*
- *Could we have someone build the 'perfect' garden spot or raised bed, add the 'perfect' amount of 'x, y, z' and then plant bulbs at the 'perfect' depth? I don't know about most, but my garden spots may be full of tree roots, red clay, rocks, bad soil, etc.*
- *Perhaps the ADS could partner with another society, say Daylilies, and each society could organize and run a few sessions for the members of both societies.*
- *I hope 2021's spring event includes at least one design presentation.*
- *Please have someone video a convention show and/or tour of daffodil gardens and show it on ZOOM for a session or two.*
- *Hold some side programs on basics of care—in part for beginners and in part to see how folks in different areas of the country do things differently.*
- *I'd definitely like to see some featured segments on various hybridizers (survey of cultivars through the years; breeding goals and specialties; growing conditions)*
- *More on species in the wild (exploring, photographing, conservation)*

- *Grow, cut and present from one's garden.*
- *More field trips, short impressions from members about their work.*

Discussion:

82% of respondents to the Fall Forum survey grow and display their daffodils and 81% are members of their local daffodil societies. In terms of ADS membership: 15% have been members less than 5 years; 9% in the 5-to-10-year category; 22% in the 10-to-20-year category and 47% have been members for more than 20 years. These values appear to be consistent with an older organization and the focus should be on expanding the less than 5 year category.

Further insight was gained by examining the method required to conduct this forum. 88% of respondents liked the ZOOM method of conduct and 80% recommended its continued use. The overwhelming majority of respondents enjoyed the 2020 Virtual Fall Forum immensely. There were many kudos for the behind-the-scenes workers and organizers. As noted earlier, forum participation looks to be well attended either as a virtual or physical event with up to 30% of respondents desirous of having both a physical component and a virtual component to a future forum.

The conduct of the survey could be improved in the future by collecting the answers online without having the respondents responsible for getting their surveys to the survey coordinator. Many people had trouble getting their input saved after filling out the Adobe form. The form was not useable on all participant platforms. Only one person refused to resubmit the survey. Many survived two and three attempts of unsuccessful saves. Eighteen surveys were mailed in. A 30% return of surveys is phenomenal!

Thank you to everyone for your patience and perseverance for such a successful ADS event!