

## Chapter 2

# The Breeders

By the year 1900 a commercial bulbs industry had begun to develop in Britain. The standard training in horticulture was an apprenticeship on the staff of one of the great houses where the word of the head gardener was law and his experience and meticulous knowledge of plantmanship and propagation was passed on in years of hard practical graft. Some of the more independent trainees set up as nurserymen, producing and propagating newer and better varieties of fruit trees, ornamental trees and shrubs and of course, the many hardier species of plants being discovered all over the world.

The nurserymen began to select and offer stocks of herbaceous and bulb plants and amateur enthusiasts began to breed especially daffodils of better form and substance than the material currently available. Noted breeders began to win national acclaim.

Legacies of striking new varieties were left by Rev. William Herbert, Edward Leeds (a stockbroker of Manchester), Rev. G.H. Engleheart of Dinton, William Backhouse of Co. Durham, A.D. Williams and Peter Barr, to be followed by Cornish brothers P.D. & J.C. Williams and Mrs. R.O. Backhouse (daughter-in-law of William Backhouse).

More recently a splendid range of miniatures has been produced by Alec Gray in Cornwall and currently we have a new selection of early flowering trumpets, tazettas and novelties still being evaluated and released from Barbara Fry at Rosewarne.

These new varieties brought success on the exhibition benches and a few of these varieties proved to be great improvements for commercial production, giving larger crops of bulbs and not only better quality flowers but more flowers from a given weight of bulbs.

Breeding was also carried on in Ireland where Guy Wilson and Lionel Richardson produced many outstanding new varieties.

The daffodil began to achieve new heights of perfection; large golden trumpets of immaculate form, striking bicolours and a wide range of

coloured centres both small cup and ruffled. However, the elusive goal which teased breeders for years was the true pink until the appearance of the variety Mrs. R.O. Backhouse, which was sufficiently pink to enthuse the search for greater perfection.