

# Lewisboro's Golden Roads

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*I wandered lonely as a cloud  
 That floats on high o'er vales and hills,  
 When all at once I saw a crowd,  
 A host, of golden daffodils...*

**T**HIS POEM, originally published in 1807, and perhaps one of William Wordsworth's most recited poems, encapsulates the beauty that Lewisboro Garden Club's Golden Roads Daffodils program has given to the residents not only of Lewisboro, but travelers through the town as well. Fifteen years of dedicated gardeners and countless community volunteer hours have provided weeks of springtime beauty along the roadways of this town in New York's Northern Westchester County fifty miles north of New York City. The Lewisboro Garden Club (LGC) is a community service garden club and Golden Roads Daffodils is one of its many community beautification programs. The Golden Roads Daffodil plantings are limited to municipal (state and local) and nonprofit organizations' roadsides. There is no cost to the town for the Golden Roads program. Homeowners and businesses are also encouraged to plant along their roadsides.

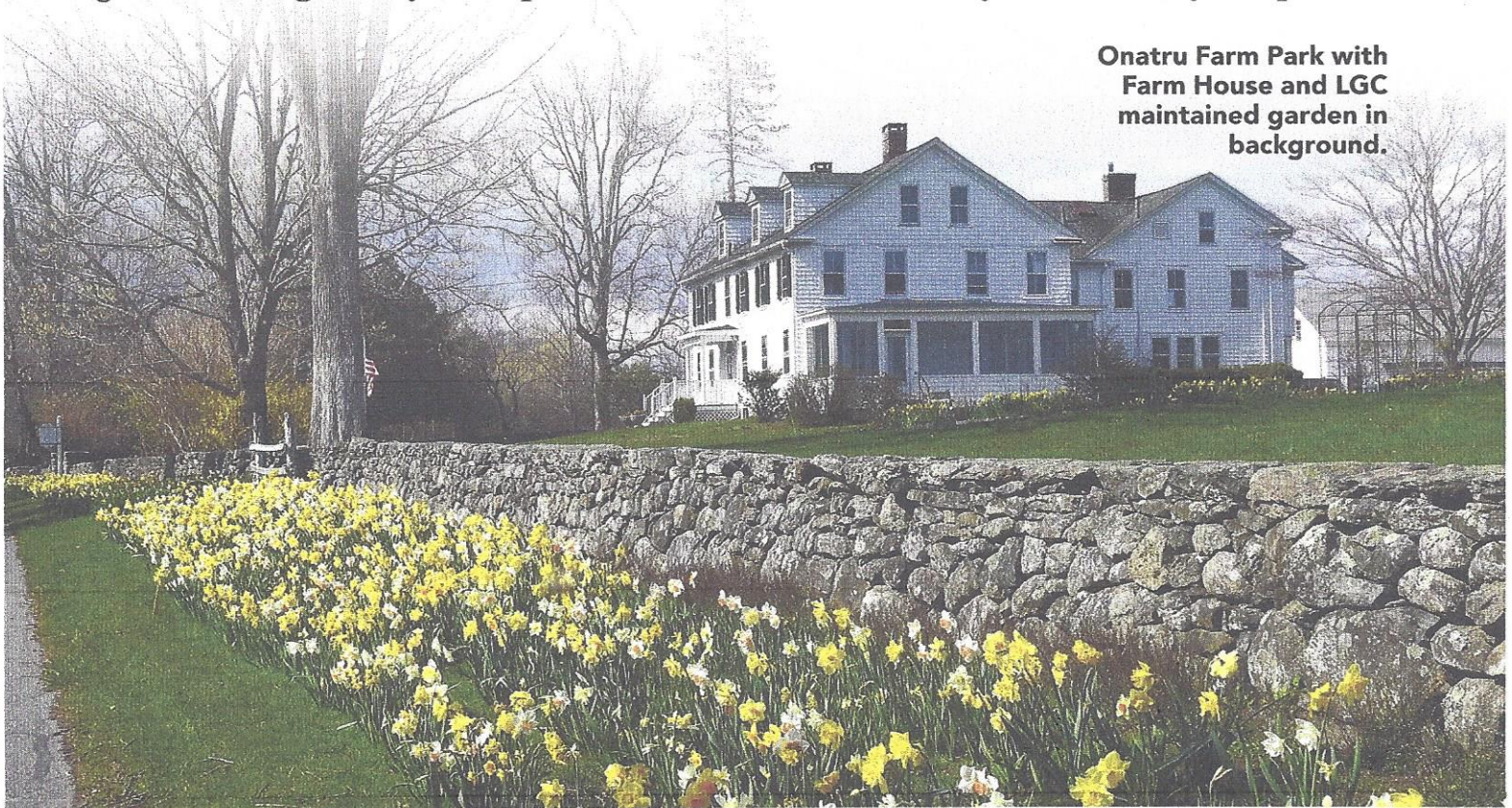
The idea for this roadside project was suggested by Lewisboro Garden Club member Suzanne Andrews, who noticed daffodil plantings in a neighboring



community. In 2006, intrigued by the idea, the LGC formed a six-member committee to develop the project and named the program Golden Roads Daffodils. Working with Colorblends of Bridgeport, CT, the committee chose an existing blend that would provide a display to last through the early, mid and late daffodil seasons and renamed it the Golden Roads Blend. The 15 to 20 varieties in the mix have changed over the years, always with the goal of keeping in mind an extended display.

At first the thought was to plant daffodil bulbs scattered throughout the twenty-nine square-mile town that snuggles into Connecticut's elbow, and to offer a flyer and a web-based Golden Roads Daffodils driving tour describing the planting locations. Early plantings started on a small scale, 700-800 bulbs; the first planting was in Onatru Farm Park, not along a well-traveled highway. These early plantings were a bit disorganized remembers George Scott, head of the Golden Roads committee. "We learned the hard way that we needed a better plan, and a planting grid system," he said. For these early plantings the area chosen was gridded using surveyor's tape and nails which were easily disturbed by the plant-

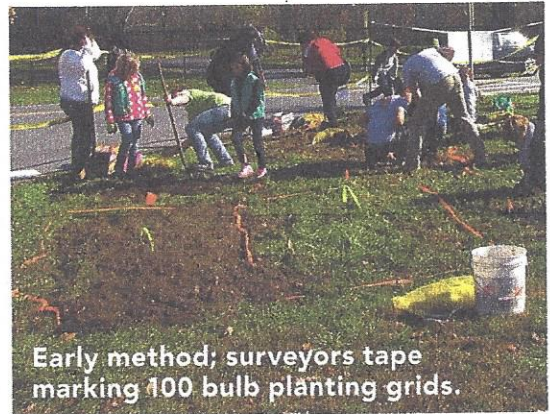
**Onatru Farm Park with  
Farm House and LGC  
maintained garden in  
background.**





ers during the planting process. Now a striping machine like those used to stripe athletic fields is used. "When you have straight lines, it is a lot easier," admitted Mr. Scott, "especially when you are laying out a grid for 4,000 bulbs."

Presently, the group uses a 45 square foot grid-ded section that is planted with 100 bulbs, one bag of bulbs per each section within the total square footage, which makes the counting and placement of bulbs more uniform. A planting of 2,000 bulbs would require a minimum planting bed of 900 to 1,200 square feet. A planting of 4,000 bulbs requires from 1,600 to 2,000 square feet of space. Over the past 15 years, the LGC has planted more than 50,000 daffodil bulbs along the roads with in Lewisboro's borders. Plantings range from 400 to more than 8,000 daffodils.



Early method; surveyors tape marking 100 bulb planting grids.

*'...Ten thousand saw I at a glance,  
 Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.'*

An important part of the Golden Roads process is the financing. Before any bulbs were planted 15 years ago, start-up funding was received from the LGC. For the first five years, the Golden Roads Daffodils committee raised money by selling a variety of daffodil bulbs by direct marketing using a color tri-fold

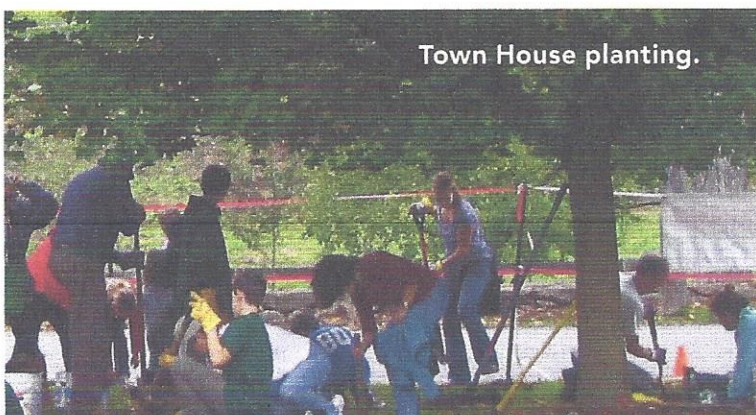




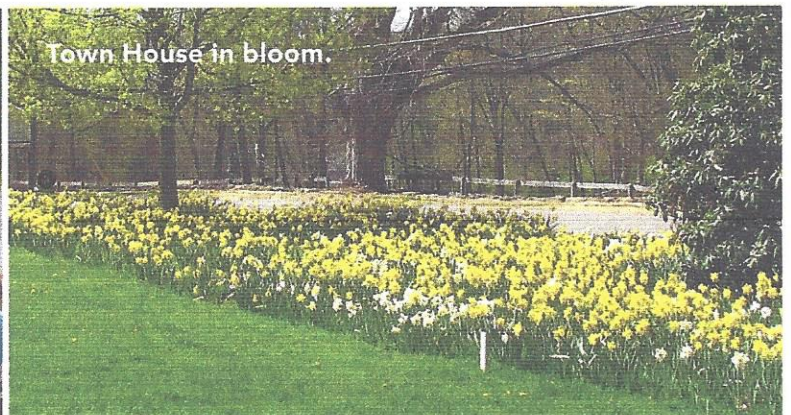
brochure, but this proved to be more labor intensive than anticipated and there after only sold bulbs at the town's annual library fair and other garden club events. Profit from sales during the first five years put the program on a strong footing. The program is self-supporting through bulb sales and donations and the committee's budget is separate from that of the LGC. Our local nurseries, Copia Home and Garden in Vista hamlet and Gossett Brothers Nursery in South Salem hamlet, support the program by donating bulbs. Homeowners support the roadway beautification endeavor by purchasing 25 and 100-item bags of bulbs for their own gardens.

Planning begins in February when the committee meets to select the fall planting location and discuss what it wants to do and what realistically can be done. How large an area is available? How many bulbs need to be purchased? What varieties have worked well, have naturalized well and will give a pleasing palate? The following considerations have made for years of mostly successful plantings:

- The areas chosen should receive ample sunlight over the six-week period—full sun preferred, but will plant in partial shade; nearby trees need to be taken into consideration. Remember trees that are bare during the planting season will start leafing out come spring blooming time.
- Avoid low-lying areas (swales) that may retain water. Daffodil bulbs can rot if



Town House planting.



Town House in bloom.



Nonprofit preschool planting along state road with police presence 2015.

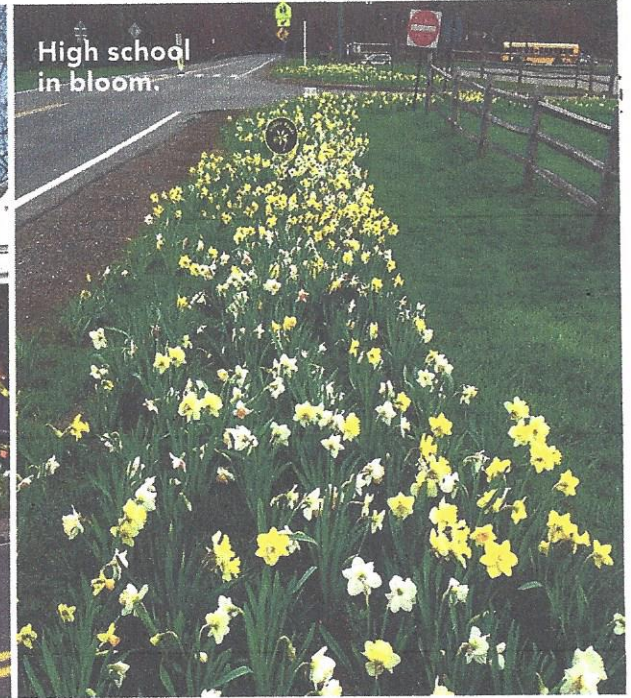
Nonprofit preschool in bloom.



constantly damp.

- Choose highly visible locations and avoid downward sloping roadsides.
- Leave a three-foot minimum setback from the road. This allows for a pedestrian walkway (Lewisboro has no sidewalks) and provides safety for the volunteers planting the bulbs.
- Try to avoid areas with poison ivy. It is difficult to eradicate and the roots can remain viable in the soil for up to five years.
- It is important that the planted areas should not be mowed until the middle of June, preferably July 1. A Golden Roads logo sign and planting bed perimeter “Do Not Mow” stakes are placed in each plot. Delaying mowing and allowing the leaves to “brown-out” prolongs a bulb’s vitality.
- Organic fertilizer is broadcast in alternate years as shoots emerge. This is particularly important for the partially shaded daffodils.





- If an area is to be enlarged in the future, the additional area is staked out at the time of the original planting.

Important to the program is the enthusiastic support of local government officials and community organizations. Town Board approval of the location is needed. In the case of plantings along state highways, the approval of the state Department of Transportation is required. This approval must be sought months beforehand so planning can begin.

When planting day finally arrives in late October or early November, the grids have been laid out, 50 to 70 volunteers have been gathered from the LGC, Girl and Boy Scout troops, school groups, and community members and organized into two 90-minute shifts. Many volunteers return year after year. Refreshments and water are on hand. Safety requirements are tantamount. Protective fencing is in place and the police are notified of the planting activity and are on hand to alert oncoming traffic. The planting activity takes three to



four hours. And that doesn't include the hours members of the committee spend tidying up the area and reseeding after the volunteers have left.

Plantings do not last forever. Some of the older plantings required replanting after a number of years. "We have developed a critical eye over the years and have become more selective of locations," George Scott said. "Shady locations, steep slopes, swales and moss-covered areas present problems. Actually, with many tree-lined roads, we may be running low on ideal 4,000 bulb planting areas, so we are now considering 2,000 bulb or smaller locations." Procedures have improved in 15 years. After check-in, new planters are shown a demo plot and instructed in bulb planting procedures. Test digs are done to test the soil.

Issues aside, come March, the results are spectacular! Thousands of daffodils bursting forth in golden yellow and sparkling white along the roadsides greet the travelers' eyes. The committee publishes a free Golden Roads Daffodils Driving Tour flyer highlighting the displays. Public feedback is enthusiastic and appreciative of the LGC's beautification efforts.

Planting during the pandemic placed a slight damper on Golden Roads Daffodils' 2020's endeavors. The area and number of bulbs was smaller, only 1,400 bulbs. Fewer volunteers were needed and were limited to LGC members, and all precautions were in place. Personal protective equipment and distancing was required. But the thoughts of a golden spring and more golden roads in 2021 was assured and all could say, as did William Wordsworth...

*...I gazed—and gazed—but little thought  
What wealth the show to me had brought:  
...And then my heart with pleasure fills,  
And dances with the daffodils.*