

Fall and Winter Blooming Daffodils

December, 1999

Yes, there really ARE daffodils which bloom in the fall and winter. And not just paperwhites. And not just bulbs that have been tricked into blooming in the wrong season. There are several species which bloom naturally in the fall.



The autumn-flowering *N. viridiflorus*, grass green as its name implies, is unique in the daffodil kingdom. No other daffodil is all green. Many have green eyes, or green tubes, or green tips to their petals, but no other daffodil is all green. The bloom is miniature-size, and comes with one to four blooms to the stem. Blooms have narrow petals and a very short corona, usually six-lobed. Rarely do leaves accompany the bloom stalk. Botanically, it belongs in the Section Jonquillae, so its leaves, when it has them, are rush-like, something akin to wild onions or wild garlic or chives.

The blooms are inconspicuous, and would be hard to see in the wild, except for the powerful musky fragrance. The bulb likes a hot dry summer, and growth is triggered by autumn rains. It is native to a small area around Algeciras and to low coastal altitudes in Morocco.

N. serotinus is another autumn-flowering species. Native to the coastal areas on both sides of the Mediterranean Sea, it has miniature-size blooms with white petals with a minuscule yellow to orange cup. As with *N. viridiflorus*, flowers appear soon after the first autumn rains, and late September through to December may be regarded as normal flowering time. Thread-like, slightly glaucous leaves, if there are any, appear after flowering.





N. cantabricus (pictured) and its subspecies flower in winter to early spring, December to February in cultivation. They are relatives of the little yellow *N. bulbocodium*, or hoop petticoat daffodils. While most of the bulbocodium tribe is yellow or creamy white, the *cantabricus* are white, some brilliant sparkling white.

There are some lovely little hybrids from *N. cantabricus* crosses. 'Fyno' (pictured) is one which was bred in Australia by Rod Barwick. It is always the first of my autumn-flowering daffodils to bloom. And it multiplies rapidly, so that a few bulbs soon make a nice pot full of blossoms. Mr. Barwick has also given us 'Kholmes', 'Orclus', 'Smarple', 'Spoirot', and the white and yellow 'Mitimoto'. Older 'Jessamy', 'Nylon', and 'Tarlatan', bred by D. Blanchard in England, are also well worth growing, if you can find a source. These would make lovely pots in a cold greenhouse.



N. pachybolbus (pictured) looks and smells very like the paperwhites, but with smaller individual florets. It gets its name from the very large bulbs, two to three inches in diameter, and up to four inches in height. Fernandes gives its flowering time as December to February, but it has bloomed here in November. There's usually a bloom for the Thanksgiving table.

I grow these autumn-flowering bulbs in my coldframe, as the winters in Ohio are too much too severe to grow them outdoors unprotected. And the pots are lifted each spring, after foliage has matured, and put in the garage where they get no water until fall. A good summer baking seems to be necessary to get these little bulbs to bloom.

Other fall-blooming species include the yellow *N. cavanillesii*; the white *N. broussonetti* from Morocco which resembles the paperwhites, but without the cup; and *N. elegans* which is in the Section Tazettæ. When *N. elegans* opens, it has a dark green or greenish brown cup, but as the flower matures, the cup becomes a dull orange.

Sources for some of these bulbs are:

Glenbrook Bulb Farm (Rod Barwick) 28 Russell Road, Claremont, Tasmania 7011, Australia

Broadleigh Gardens, Barr House, Bishops Hull, Taunton, Somerset TA4 1AE, England (doesn't ship to U.S.)

Monocot Nursery, "Jacklands," Jacklands Bridge, Tickenham, Clevedon, North Somerset BS21 6 SG, England

Nancy R. Wilson, Species & Miniature Narcissus, 6525 Briceland-Thorn Rd., Garberville, CA 95542

Seed is sometimes available from the various national rock garden societies. Bulbs grown from seed should flower in four to five years.