

2017: Year of the daffodil



Trumpet Daffodil. National Garden Bureau photo



Trumpet Daffodil. National Garden Bureau photo



Tulip Dordogne and Jonquilla Narcissus Golden Echo. National Garden Bureau photo



Narcissus Dutchmaster. National Garden Bureau photo



Narcissus Bulbs. National Garden Bureau photo



Split corona Daffodil. National Garden Bureau photo

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Daffodils, a spring-blooming, self-propagating perennial, originated in Europe, predominantly Spain, Portugal, France and Austria, where they are native to meadows and woody forests. Some naturalized in Great Britain and from there, narcissus bulbs were introduced to North America by pioneer women who made the long ocean voyage to America to build a new future. Given limited space for bringing personal goods, they sewed dormant daffodil bulbs into the hems of their skirts to plant at their new homes to remind them of the gardens they left

behind. The remnant ancestors of those bulbs still persist today in older gardens in the eastern half of the US, making them a part of our heritage for over 300 years!

The official botanical genus name for Daffodils is *Narcissus*, which comes from the Greek word 'Narkissos' and its base word 'Narke', meaning sleep or numbness, attributed to the sedative effect from the alkaloids in its plants. The plant family is Amaryllidaceae, meaning all members are poisonous, which is great for gardeners because that makes them critter proof. Daffodil is actually just a nickname, not a scientific or Latin name.

Basic types and varieties

The Royal Horticultural Society divides *Narcissus* into the following divisions based on type, size, or number of flowers.

Division 1: Trumpet (One flower to a stem; the cup is as long as or longer than the petals.): N. 'Bravoure' Other popular trumpets: N. 'British Gamble'; N. 'Marieke'; N. 'Mount Hood'

Division 2: Large Cup (One flower to a stem; the cup is more than one-third but less than equal to the length of the petals.): N. 'Accent'; N. 'Ceylon'; N. 'Chromacolor'; N. 'Fragrant Rose'; N. 'Ice Follies'; N. 'Misty Glen'; N. 'Salome'; N. 'St. Keverne' Other popular Large Cups: N. 'Fellows Favorite'; N. 'Monal'; N. 'Stainless'

Division 3: Small Cup (One flower to a stem; the cup is not more than one-third the length of the petals.): N. 'Barrett Browning'; N. 'Dreamlight'; N. 'Merlin'; N. 'Segovia' (miniature) Other popular Small Cups: N. 'Goose Green'; N. 'Green-Eyed Lady'

Division 4: Double (One or more flowers to a stem, with doubling of the petals or the cup or both.): N. 'Tahiti' Other popular Doubles: N. 'Bridal Crown'; N. 'Double Smiles'

Division 5: Triandrus (Usually two or more nodding flowers to a stem; petals are reflexed.): N. 'Thalia'; N. 'Hawera' (miniature) Other popular Triandrus: N. 'Ginter's Gem'; N. 'Katie Heath'; N. 'Starlight Sensation'; N. 'Sunlight Sensation'

Division 6: Cyclamens (One flower to a stem; petals are significantly reflexed; flower at an acute angle to the stem, with a very short neck.): N. 'Rapture' (and Pannill) Other popular Cyclamineus: N. 'February Gold'; N. 'Jetfire'; N. 'Tweety Bird'

Division 7: Jonquilla (One to five flowers to a stem; petals spreading or reflexed; flowers usually fragrant; foliage is often reed-like or at least very narrow and dark green.): N. 'Golden Echo'; N. 'Hillstar'; N. 'Intrigue'; N. 'Kokopelli'; N. 'Quail'; N. 'Stratosphere'; N. 'Sun Disc' (miniature); N. 'Sweetness' Other popular Jonquilla: N. 'Beautiful Eyes'; N. 'Derringer'; N. 'Pappy George'

Division 8: Tazetta (Usually three to twenty flowers to a stout stem; leaves broad; petals spreading, not reflexed; flowers fragrant.): N. 'Falconet'; N. 'Geranium' Other popular Tazettas: N. 'Avalanche' (Thomas Jefferson had this one in his garden); N. 'MartINETTE'

Division 9: Poeticus (Usually one flower to a stem; petals pure white; cup is usually disc-shaped, with a green or yellow center and red rim; flowers fragrant.): N. 'Actaea'

Division 11: Split Corona (Cup split – usually for more than half its length.): N. 'Tripartite' Other popular Split Corona: N. 'Curly Lace'; N. 'Exotic Mystery'; N. 'Mary Gay Lirette'

Division 12: Other (Daffodil cultivars which do not fit the definition of any other division.): N. 'Tete-a-Tete' (miniature) Other popular Other-types: N. 'Toto'; N. 'Bittern'

Division 13: Botanical (All species and wild or reputedly wild variants and hybrids.): N. obvallaris; N. poeticus var. recurvus Other popular Botanical-types: N. x odorus Linnaeus; N. x odorus flore pleno

There are two awards given by the American Daffodil Society to varieties for specific qualities or uses: The Wister Award for garden excellence and the Pannill Award for exhibition excellence. In the list above, varieties in bold are Wister award winners.

Garden how-to's

Unlike many spring flowering bulbs, daffodils are not eaten by mice, voles, squirrels, rabbits or deer because they are poisonous and distasteful, which helps to keep pets and children from ingesting them. Daffodils are great for picking and arranging in cut flower bouquets and they are also perfect for container planting and forcing.

The ideal daffodil planting time depends on where you live. In zones 3-5, you should plant in September-November. If you live further south, in zones 6-9, then you should wait until October-December.

Bulb sizes are determined by the age of the bulb and also the division of the cultivar. Division 1-4 tend to be larger (14-16 cm or 16- 18 cm in circumference) than Division 5-7 (12- 14 cm or 14-16 cm). Of course, miniatures are normally smaller sized bulbs (8-10 cm or 10- 12 cm).

Planting instructions

Keeping bulb size in mind, daffodil bulbs should be spaced 3x the width of the bulb apart, or 4- 6" on center, depending on the size of the bulb. As for planting depth, daffodils should be planted 3x the height of the bulb deep, or 4-6" to the bottom of the hole, depending on the size of the bulb. Planting in full sun is preferable, but partial shade (at least 1/2 day sun) is acceptable.

Digging and dividing is normally not necessary if the bulbs are planted in fertile soil, have sufficient water during the spring growing season, and if they get plenty of sunlight for 6 weeks after the blooms are finished. However, if you do want to divide them, do so as soon as the foliage begins to turn yellow. Dig under the whole clump with a spading fork, shake off the loose soil and carefully separate the roots of the large bulbs from one another. If daughter bulbs are attached to the mother bulbs, it's best to leave them together – they will separate underground when the time is right. The best choice is to replant bulbs immediately after digging, however if storing is necessary, store dry in mesh bags with plenty of air circulation. Removing spent flowers is nice for aesthetic reasons, but because most hybrid daffodils have very little nectar and have heavy, distasteful pollen which is seldom spread by the wind or insects, few are accidentally pollinated. Therefore, few produce real seeds which would drain the bulb's energy needed to produce next year's bloom...so it's not really necessary to deadhead daffodils.