

Digging Daffodil Bulbs for Beginners

By: Clay Higgins

As a rule of thumb, daffodils should be dug six to eight weeks after the daffodil bloom season, while the foliage is still visible, has turned brown and fallen over. Daffodils should be replanted in the fall. If one takes reasonable care, daffodils are good keepers and can be successfully kept over the summer and replanted when it gets cool. Keeping them cool means, under shade where the air can move.

Daffodils are a cold weather plant, and are dormant in the summer. Digging is needed every three or four years to thin daffodils out so that they will continue to provide a healthy and hardy bloom each year. I'm not an advocate of tying-up or tying-back the daffodil foliage

Digging Daffodils: The digging process should start with and be finalized during the blooming season. This insures that all the bulbs that are to be dug are located and properly marked and named before the foliage disappears. When digging bulbs it is critical to keep bunches of bulbs separate. Once a daffodil bulb is dug, it looks just like any other daffodil bulb.

Mesh bags like "onion" or "orange" bags that you obtain from the produce department of grocery stores are the ideal type containers to hold freshly dug daffodils. The bags can be obtained online from commercial sources. The second critical part of digging is having a reliable digging instrument I recommend the flat tonged garden fork over a shovel.

Most freshly dug bulbs will come out of the ground with foliage attached. Gently twist off the foliage separating the bulbs. Collect the foliage for removal from the daffodil beds. However, do not place daffodil foliage into your compost pile for the same reason that you remove the foliage from the beds: it may contain virus and disease that can be spread to others. The bulbs should be immediately placed into the mesh bags, one variety or cultivar a bag, and the bags labeled.

Drying of Bulbs: Freshly dug daffodil bulbs should be placed in a shady and airy place. Allow the bulbs to dry in the open air for approximately two weeks. Spread the bulbs out so that they are only one-layer deep. After a couple weeks of drying the daffodils are ready for the next stage, which is storage for the summer.

Storage of Bulbs Over the Summer: The method many use, and I'm one of them, is to store daffodil bulbs in an open air location under shade. I use lightweight 4 foot wide 2X3X 8 Fir wood frames covered with a ¾ inch wire mesh screen under a canvas carport. The wire mesh allows the bulbs to be open to the air on all sides.

In Summary: Dig daffodil bulbs about six to eight weeks after blooming. Take care when digging bulbs to maintain integrity of the variety and to have a name tag attached so that when fall planting comes, the variety will be known. Storage across the summer should be in shade, and in a place where the air circulates. Make a list of the bulbs that you are going to replant, and label the bulbs newly put into the ground. Good luck and good digging.