

Planting Daffodil Bulbs

October, 2002

Well, it's that time of year again. By now, I hope you've either bought bulbs locally or received the bulbs you ordered earlier in the year. Isidore brought some nice rain to my area, and I hope it did for you as well. Once the soil cools, you can plant your daffodils. You can plant any time up until the ground freezes, but it's a good idea to get bulbs planted early enough so that good root development takes place. Bulbs will be fine in even severe winters, provided they have made good root growth ahead of time.

If you bought bulbs locally, I hope you picked the biggest, fattest bulbs available. Before planting, give the bulbs a good squeeze. If it's soft, discard it. A soft bulb can indicate it has the larva of a bulb fly inside, or it can indicate rot. You don't want either one to go into your garden.

Daffodils are easy to grow, and they aren't fussy about whether they're planted in clay or sandy soil, alkaline or acidic. But if you want the best from your bulbs, prepare the soil adequately. Both clay and sandy soils will benefit by the addition of peatmoss, fine pine bark, or other organic materials. NEVER use fresh manure as it can burn the bulbs and cause rot and losses.



As you can see from the photo, bulbs come in all different sizes. Plant your bulbs about twice as deep as the bulbs are tall. Since my winters are severe, I plant even the miniature bulbs at least three inches deep. If you're naturalizing your bulbs, and don't want to dig them for years, plant the bulbs a little deeper, about eight inches deep for standard sized bulbs. And don't be afraid to let

sufficient space between the bulbs, so there's room for them to multiply. Mix a little low-nitrogen fertilizer (3-6-6 or 5-10-10) into the soil under the bulbs, but place the bulb on some plain soil, or a little sand. You don't want the bulb base to come in contact with the fertilizer. After you've planted, mulch with fine pine bark or pine straw, and then give the bulbs a good watering. Be sure to label your planting in some way, or make a map, so you'll know where you have bulbs planted and what the names are, just in case you decide you want to exhibit, or that you like a particular cultivar so much that you want to buy more.

You can also plant bulbs in pots, either for forcing blooms before they would bloom outdoors, or just to decorate the patio or other areas. For potting, choose big round bulbs, not the double- or triple-nosed bulbs. The offsets might not provide a bloom, and by choosing only rounds you can get more blooming sized bulbs into the pot. In cold winter climates, keep the pots protected through the worst of winter weather. A cold garage will usually do the job.

After planting, sit back and think of all the lovely blooms you'll have next spring.