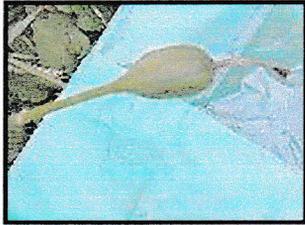


# What's that Round Thing?

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Over the last two weeks, several people have asked me, "What's that round thing under the daffodil flower?" One person was told they could plant that "bulb under the flower" and it would grow and eventually bloom.

So, what is it? It's the ovary, or seedpod, of the plant. We don't usually think of daffodils having seeds, since we grow them from bulbs, but they do. Breeders developing new daffodils make controlled crosses to get seed. The seeds are planted in hopes of getting a better cultivar than what's already in commerce. Daffodils don't usually set seed by themselves, or open pollinated seed, though sometimes spiders or other insects will pollinate them. It doesn't harm the plants. When the seedpod is almost ripe, the dried flower blossom will fall off, and you can often hear the seeds rattling around in the pod. This is a good time to pick it, to avoid losing the seed on the ground. If you wait too long, and you find a dry open pod, the seed is gone.



If you're interested in watching the life cycle of a plant from seed to bulb, you can plant the seeds as soon as they're ripe. The seeds are like black, shiny pearls, about an eighth of an inch across.



Depending on your climate, you can either plant in open ground or in pots that you sink either in the ground or into a coldframe for the winter. Once you've planted the seeds, be sure they get some water over the summer, as the seeds send down a root way before they send up top growth in the spring. I plant in pots in a mixture of potting soil and lots of granite grit—maybe half or more grit. I buy this at the feed store. They sell it for chickens. Keep the potting mix light, so it's well-drained. You don't want to kill the seeds by over watering. Cover the seed with about a half inch of the potting mix, and then cover with a layer of granite grit. This keeps the soil from washing out of the pot when it rains, and it makes it easier to pull whatever weeds might come up. The seeds will germinate the following spring, and they'll look like grass seed or wild onions sprouting. The second year, they'll look like stronger wild onions, and by the third year, they'll have leaves that look like daffodil foliage. By the fifth or sixth year, you will likely get a flower. But don't expect the flower to look like the one the seed came from. It came from a hybrid plant with a mixed genetic background, so any number of genes could be dominant. It might be similar to the parent, or it might look completely different.

You might say five years is a long time to wait for a flower, but if you plant some seed each year, after the first five-year wait, you'll have something new coming along to look at every year. Who knows, you might get a world-beater!