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These bulbs thrive in Southern gardens

By Andie Rathbone, Smith County Master Gardeners 9 hrs ago

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Grand Primo is a robust and reliable, full-flowering and fragrant narcissus.

Courtesy

One of the first things I learned when I moved to Texas was that many of the narcissus that grew so brilliantly in Missouri, like the large cupped King Alfred, disappeared in the heat of the Dallas summers. Luckily, I learned about Southern daffodils.

With several hundred varieties to consider, Southern gardeners find it useful to become familiar with the horticultural divisions established by the American Daffodil Society to determine what will or will not thrive in Southern gardens. For example, with a few exceptions, most of the large trumpets (Division 1) will fail in the South; daffodils in the large-cup class (Division 2) usually do better. Cultivars in the jonquil hybrid group (Division 7), and among the tazettas (Division 8) also do well here.

Join the Smith County Master Gardeners for the From Bulbs to Blooms Conference and Sale on Oct. at Harvey Convention Center. This event is free and open to the public. Information can be found at <https://txmg.org/smith/coming-events>.

The bulb sale began almost 20 years ago to promote old garden heirloom bulbs that perform as reliable perennials here in the Deep South. We have gone to great lengths to stock the sale with Southern-grown bulbs that are guaranteed to perform well in your gardens. Here are a few of my favorites that will be available at this year's sale:

— Carlton is a large-cupped Division II narcissus that blooms in mid season with two-toned yellow flowers on stems that are 18 to 20 inches tall. Its flowers have a mild vanilla scent. It is easily grown in average, well-drained soil in full sun to part shade. It's great as a cut flower and naturalizes exceptionally well.

— Celon is also a large cup Division 2 narcissus that has upwardly facing blooms with yellow petals and an orange-red cup on a 14- to 16-inch stem. It is an excellent cultivar for naturalizing along wood's edge or as an under planting in the perennial border or ground cover bed. It blooms in early to mid season and makes excellent cut flowers.

— Grand Primo is one of the most robust and reliable, full-flowering and fragrant narcissus in our sale. Its tolerance for heat makes this tazetta the ideal daffodil for the Southern garden. Each 14- to 18-inch stalk produces clusters of highly scented pale yellow flowers with darker yellow cups that appear in mid-March to early April. It thrives in any soil, from sandy loam to heavy clay. Grand Primo is a great naturalizer in sunny borders and can also be forced indoors and then planted in the garden. Don't miss the chance to add this hard-to-find bulb to your spring garden.

— Thalia is a narcissus that blooms later than other daffodils — normally in April. It has very narrow petals that bloom in pure white nodding flowers — two to three fragrant blooms per 12- to 14-inch stem. It makes an excellent cut flower as its fragrant blooms last for an exceptionally long time in a vase.

All these bulbs should be planted in full sun to part shade in well-drained soil. Plant bulbs two to three times as deep as the bulb in large clusters of four to six bulbs. All these bulbs will multiply over time and can be divided every four to six years after they bloom and their foliage has died back.

The Smith County Master Gardener program is a volunteer organization in connection with the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service.