

By [Catherine Boeckmann](#)

# GROWING DAFFODILS

## HOW TO PLANT, GROW, AND CARE FOR DAFFODILS



*Pixabay*

The bright yellow blooms of **daffodils** are a wonderful sign of spring—but do you know how and when to plant them properly? Here are tips on planting daffodil bulbs, caring for daffodils, and what to do after they flower.

Daffodils are a hardy and easy perennial that grows in most regions of North America, except in the hottest, wettest areas, such as South Florida. Daffodils are a [fall-planted bulb](#), so plant them in autumn and they will bloom in late winter or early spring.

The traditional daffodil flower may be a showy yellow or white, with six petals and a trumpet-shape central corona, but many cultivated varieties (“cultivars”) exist today. Leafless stems bear between 1 and 20 flowers; sometimes the flowers need to be staked so that they don’t weigh down the stems.

Daffodils are suitable for planting between shrubs or in a border, or for forcing blooms indoors. They look wonderful in a woodland garden and in large groves. You’ll find that many gardeners plant the bulbs not just by the dozens but by the hundreds! Daffodil flowers also make for great springtime [cut flowers](#).

## PLANTING WHEN TO PLANT DAFFODILS

- Plant daffodil bulbs in the fall—about 2 to 4 weeks before the ground freezes. See [local frost dates](#) and get [more tips on planting fall bulbs](#).

## CHOOSING AND PREPARING A PLANTING SITE

- Select a site that offers full sun or partial sun, at the least. Daffodils will bloom best when given adequate exposure to early spring sunshine!
- Most daffodils tolerate a range of soils but grow best in moderately fertile, well-drained soil that is kept moist during the growing season. They are susceptible to rot when kept too wet, so make sure that you plant them in a well-draining spot.
- Many of the popular species prefer neutral to acidic soils, but some prefer slightly alkaline soils, so consult the supplier of your bulbs to see which is best for your daffodil variety.
- Over time, daffodils will produce new, “daughter” bulbs that are attached to the main bulb which you planted originally. This results in nice little clumps of daffodils that stay relatively contained to where you planted them.

## HOW TO PLANT DAFFODILS

- Select high-quality daffodil bulbs that have not been dried out. The larger the bulb, the better.
- Plant bulbs 1-½ to 5 times their own depth. Where winters are severe, make sure there are at least 3 inches of soil covering the bulb.
- Daffodils will tolerate some crowding, but they prefer to be spaced about 3 to 6 inches apart.
- It may help to sprinkle a little bulb fertilizer in the hole during planting. [Learn more about preparing soil for planting](#).
- Resist the temptation to uncover spring-flowering plants such as daffodils and [tulips](#). You can loosen [mulch](#), but the shoots will still benefit from protection against cold, drying winds in early spring.
- Daffodils contain something called oxalic acid—a substance that makes them unpalatable to most rodent pests. However, if yours are being bothered, consider adding sharp sharp pieces of shells or a pelleted rodent deterrent into and around each planting hole.
- [Get more tips for growing bulbs](http://www.almanac.com/content/flower-bulb-growing-tips)(<http://www.almanac.com/content/flower-bulb-growing-tips>).





## CARE HOW TO GROW DAFFODILS

- Apply a low-nitrogen, high-potash (potassium) fertilizer after flowering if bulbs are not performing as desired. Learn more about [preparing soil for planting](#) and [soil amendments](#).
- Water late-flowering daffodils in dry spring weather (flowers may abort in dry conditions).
- Deadhead plants as flowers fade (for neater garden appearance) and allow leaves to remain for at least 6 weeks.
- Lift and divide the clumps when flowering becomes sparse or the clumps congested.
- After daffodils bloom in the spring, allow the plants to grow until they die off. Do NOT cut down earlier. They need time after blooming to store energy in the bulbs for next year's bloom.
- To remove the dead plants, either snip them off at the base, or twist the leaves while pulling lightly.
- Once daffodils and tulips have gone by, add bonemeal to the soil for next year's blooms.

## PESTS/DISEASES

- Daffodils are both [deer-resistant](http://www.almanac.com/content/deer-resistant-plants) and [rodent-proof](http://www.almanac.com/blog/gardening/gardening/rodent-proof-flower-bulbs), as these animals do not like the taste of the bulbs in the Narcissus family.
- Daffodils can also be [toxic to pets](http://www.almanac.com/content/plants-are-poisonous-pets), so make sure your animals don't munch on them.
- The most common problems include large narcissus bulb fly, bulb scale mite, narcissus nematode, [slugs](#), narcissus basal rot and other fungal infections, and viruses.

## HARVEST/STORAGE USING DAFFODILS AS CUT FLOWERS

- When cut, daffodils should be kept alone in a vase, as their stems secrete a fluid that promotes the wilting of other flowers. If you must combine them, soak them by themselves for as long as possible, then rinse them and add them to the arrangement last. [Learn more about keeping cut flowers fresh.](#)





- Note that

contact with the sap of daffodils may irritate skin or aggravate skin allergies.

## RECOMMENDED VARIETIES

- **'Golden Ducat'** is a double daffodil with pure yellow petals. It blooms in mid- to late season and grows 12 to 16 inches tall.
- **'Petit Four'** is a good choice for a partially shady site. The flower has white petals with a double cup of apricot pink and grows 16 inches tall.
- **'Rip van Winkle'** is a miniature double daffodil that grows 6 to 8 inches tall and looks great in a grove with many others of its kind.

## WIT & WISDOM

- Daffodils are a [March birth flower](http://www.almanac.com/content/march-birth-flowers)(<http://www.almanac.com/content/march-birth-flowers>).
- Daffodils symbolize regard for someone. [See more flower meanings](http://www.almanac.com/content/flower-meanings-language-flowers)(<http://www.almanac.com/content/flower-meanings-language-flowers>).

Here's some daffodil-themed prose to brighten your day:

Daffodowndilly

*She wore her yellow sun-bonnet,  
She wore her greenest gown;  
She turned to the south wind  
And curtsied up and down.  
She turned to the sunlight  
And shook her yellow head,  
And whispered to her neighbor:  
"Winter is dead."*

-A.A. Milne, *When We Were Very Young*



*Daffodils,  
That come before the swallow dares, and take  
The winds of March with beauty.*  
–William Shakespeare, *The Winter's Tale*

*I wandered lonely as a cloud  
That floats on high o'er vales and hills,  
When all at once I saw a crowd,  
A host, of golden daffodils;  
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,  
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.*  
–William Wordsworth, *I Wander'd Lonely as a Cloud*

Of Spring Weather:  
*Chillier, but daffodillier.*  
–The 1991 *Old Farmer's Almanac*

## GROWING DAFFODILS

Botanical Name	<i>Narcissus</i>
Plant Type	<a href="#">Bulb</a>
Sun Exposure	<a href="#">Full Sun</a> , <a href="#">Part Sun</a>
Soil Type	<a href="#">Loamy</a>
Soil pH	<a href="#">Slightly Acidic to Neutral</a>
Bloom Time	<a href="#">Spring</a>

Botanical Name	<i>Narcissus</i>
Flower Color	<a href="#">Orange</a> , <a href="#">White</a> , <a href="#">Yellow</a>
Hardiness Zones	<a href="#">3</a> , <a href="#">4</a> , <a href="#">5</a> , <a href="#">6</a> , <a href="#">7</a> , <a href="#">8</a> , <a href="#">9</a>
Special Features	