

Growing Daffodils in the South and Warm West by Scott Kunst, Old House Gardens

Whether you call them jonquils, narcissus, or daffodils, these tough, beautiful flowers are easy to grow throughout the South and warm West — if you choose the right varieties and understand their simple needs.

One great way to find bulbs that will thrive in your [hardiness zone](#) is to use our easy [Advanced Bulb Search](#). You'll also find a lot of helpful information in the [Bulbs for the South](#) section of our Newsletter Archives.

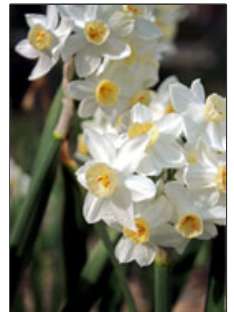
For in-depth guidance, take a look at Scott Ogden's [Garden Bulbs for the South](#) which includes 150 daffodils that do well in zones 7-9 and Texas-based advice on growing them.

Another excellent guide is [Daffodils in Florida](#) by Linda and Sara Van Beck. It's based on the life's work of the late John Van Beck, a great friend of ours and of historic daffodils. John and Linda tested hundreds of daffodils in zone-8b Tallahassee to discover those that did best in what John called the "Spanish Moss Belt" where modern, mainstream cultivars often fail.

The Van Becks' Top Choices

Though recommended specifically for the warmer half of zone 8, most of these will thrive throughout the South and warm West: [Avalanche](#), [Carlton](#), [Dick Wellband](#) (needs shade), [Early Pearl](#), [Erlicheer](#), [Geranium](#), [Grand Primo](#), [N. jonquilla](#) [Early Louisiana](#), [Mrs. Backhouse](#) (needs shade), [Tenby](#), [Texas Star](#), [Thalia](#) (needs shade), [Sweetness](#), [Trevithian](#).

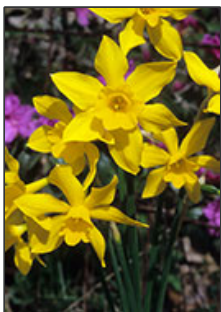
Other Excellent Performers: [Butter and Eggs](#) (needs shade), [Campernelle](#), [Double Campernelle](#), [Empress](#), [Orange Phoenix](#) [currently unavailable], [N. pseudonarcissus](#) (Lent lily), [Queen of the North](#) (despite its name!), [St. Keverne](#), and [Van Sion](#).



[Grand Primo](#)

Bill Finch's "Gulf-Coast All Stars"

Mobile's favorite gardener, Bill Finch of the *Press-Register*, is constantly on the look-out for bulbs that flourish in zone-8b/9a heat and humidity. After years of growing our bulbs and observing others that bloom happily in old gardens and abandoned homesites in the Mobile area, he's come up with a list of utterly reliable performers that he calls our "Gulf Coast All-Stars." Listed in order of bloom, they are ['Grand Primo'](#), ['Campernelle'](#), ['Carlton'](#), ['Sweetness'](#), ['Avalanche'](#), ['St. Keverne'](#), and ['Thalia'](#).



[Campernelle](#)

In the Arid Southwest

Another challenging area for bulbs is the arid Southwest. Our friend Mary Peace Douglas who gardens in Tucson and Sonoita, Arizona, has been growing our bulbs there since 1997. She reports great success with [Avalanche](#), [Conspicuous](#), [Double Campernelle](#), [Grand Primo](#), [N. jonquilla](#) [Early Louisiana](#), and [White Lady](#). If you're in the warm Southwest, give some of these a try!

Tips for Planting and Care in Zones 8 and 9

The right daffodils will bloom happily without care throughout the South, but following a few simple guidelines will help yours absolutely thrive. In an article written for beginners ("You Don't Have to 'Get Over Them,'" *Florida Gardening*, April-May 2006), Sara Van Beck offers the following advice.

"Florida daffodil culture is similar to the rest of the South — no summer irrigation, no mushroom compost (soil that is too rich or too wet leads to bulb rot), and proper fertilization based upon soil conditions.

"Do not pre-chill your bulbs.

"Plant October through December (pointy side up!), spaced apart three times the bulb's width.

“Deep planting (6 to 8 inches) provides a more even soil temperature and root space for large tazetta bulbs.

“Mulch with chopped leaves, pine straw, or mini pine-bark nuggets.

“Overplant with drought-tolerant annuals.

“The location needs full sun through mid-March and summer shade (for cooler soil).

“Water from October 1 until April 1. Daffodils require fall-winter-spring watering; drought causes poor blooming.

“No herbicides (sandy soils let chemicals percolate too fast and reach the roots).

“Daffodils are not fertilizer dependent, but love potash, and prefer a neutral soil pH. You can lightly fertilize in the fall and right after blooming with a low-nitrogen fertilizer. No slow-release fertilizers.

“Do not plant next to heavy feeders such as roses and daylilies — summer watering and fertilizer will rot daffodil bulbs.”



[Thalia](#)



[Carlton](#)

Sara's Top Picks for Beginners in Zones 8 and 9

Sara Van Beck continues: “Proven daffodils [in Gulf Coast gardens] are those very early bloomers (January and February) that are rot-resistant and require little or no cold weather. The main dividing line for growing a wide variety of daffodils in Florida seems to be Gainesville. The lack of cold is not the deciding factor as much as the earliness and severity of the heat.”

For beginners in zones 9a (Central Florida) and cooler: [Carlton](#) and [Erlicheer](#).

For beginners in zones 8b (Gainesville) and cooler: [Campernelle](#), [Carlton](#), [Erlicheer](#), *N. jonquilla* [Early Louisiana](#), [Sweetness](#), [Texas Star](#) (*N. x intermedius*), [Thalia](#), and [Trevithian](#).

You Can Do It!

To summarize: daffodils love life where it's hot, and you can grow them!

Since our founding in 1993, we've earned rave reviews from gardeners just like you by delivering heat-loving bulbs grown especially for us by small farmers in the South and California. We hope you'll join our many happy customers in the warm states and give our heirlooms a try. Happy gardening!

For more expert advice, see our

[“Dahlias for Hot Nights”](#) and

[“Bulbs for the South Newsletter Archives.”](#)

Or for a quick and easy **list of bulbs for any warm-climate garden**, use the “**Hardiness Zone**” option at our awesome [Advanced Bulb Search](#).