

American Daffodil Society



*The
Daffodil
Primer*

Zones 3-7

by Suzy Wert
edited by Jim Wilson

Welcome to the American Daffodil Society. This Primer is designed to help our new members get started growing daffodils and enjoying their beauty no matter where they live or what time of year they've joined us.

This Primer is meant as a guide, to be read and re-read, and is further enhanced online by our fantastic ADS family of websites:

DaffodilUSA.org — The granddaddy of them all, DaffodilUSA has all you need to find local societies and shows, official ADS rules, bulb sources, and lists of reliable and interesting bulbs such as Historics, Wisters, Pannills, Intermediates, and Miniatures, plus it has color photos and descriptions of the 13 different daffodil divisions. It has everything you need now, and everything you'll need in the future, too! It seems as if new content is added daily.

DaffSeek.org — A query database. Type any daffodil name and get its official information. Usually this includes photos of the flower, plus information such as when it was registered, and when it blooms. It can be searched by any of several criteria.

DaffLibrary.org — A compendium of over 1,000 documents about daffodils, including ADS-published materials. DaffLibrary also hosts the scanned collection of old Daffodil *Journals*, which will help you while away the bitter cold winter – *and* the dog days of summer. Pick a decade and have fun!

DaffTube.org — A collection of interesting presentations which include videos on how to groom flowers for exhibition and how to spot faults in a daffodil flower, and slide programs such as recent show winners from around the country.

DaffNet.org — A message board forum dating back to 2003, for all daffodil enthusiasts. It's a good place to read about different daffodils, see what new hybrids are coming along, and ask questions. If you type a daffodil question into Google, it is sure that at least one of the hits will be a conversation from Daffnet.

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Types of Daffodils – the RHS System of Classification

Narcissus is the Latin word for Daffodil, and as you'll see below, a jonquil is just a certain type of daffodil. These divisions may seem confusing, but you will learn them quickly. For now, it's important to know that not only do the divisions look different, they may also have slightly different growing requirements due to their species' ancestry.

The first four divisions are the Lower Divisions and are generally easy to grow. Div. 1, Trumpets; Div. 2, Large Cups; Div. 3, Short Cups; and Div. 4, Doubles. A Trumpet has a corona as long, or longer than its petals; the coronas get progressively shorter from there.



Div. 1



Div. 2



Div 3



Div 4

The following group is collectively called the Upper Divisions, and each Division has a specific shape because of the species it resembles.



Div. 5, the *triandrus* hybrids, typically have two or more pendant flowers and the petals often reflex back. They typically enjoy an acidic soil with dry summer shade. They are best viewed either from a lower elevation or from across the walk; otherwise, only the backs of the flowers are seen. They are usually late blooming.



Div. 6, the *cyclamineus* hybrids, usually have a shy pose and significantly reflexing petals. They also enjoy a shaded acidic situation, but they can take more water than triandrus. They are some of the earliest blooming daffodils.



Div. 7, the *jonquil* hybrids, have fragrant, usually smaller flowers on long, delicate stems. They have narrow c-shaped foliage and often come with multiple flowering heads. Although perfectly hardy, Jonquils are the darlings of the

south because they are so easy, even in the extreme summer heat with moderate rainfall. Jonquils usually bloom late and require full sun.



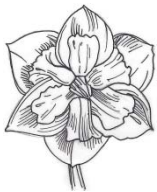
Div. 8, the *tazetta* hybrids, includes the paperwhite, a tender flower with which you may have previous experience forcing in winter. Tazettas are fragrant, with multi-flowered heads, but unlike jonquils, they have thick stems, wide foliage, and enormous bulbs. Tazettas are not always cold hardy, so read the catalog descriptions carefully, or simply select poetaz varieties, those with poeticus breeding in their background, such as, ‘Geranium’, ‘Canarybird’, ‘Cragford’ and ‘Matador’—which do well in colder climates.



Div. 9, the *poeticus*, or the Poet daffodils, are usually smallish graceful flowers with ultra-white petals and either a cup shaped or flat corona with an orange-red rim. They are easy to grow, even in clay and even in the far north. They appreciate afternoon shade and don’t like being out of the ground for extended periods of time. They generally bloom late.



Div. 10, the *bulbocodiums*, are those precious little hoop petticoats. Bloom time on bulbocodiums, and their cousins, ranges from fall through winter through spring. A most unusual group, they can be totally hardy out of doors, or greenhouse tender. Most are miniatures, although there are a few standards.



Div. 11, the split coronas, are botanically more like the flowers in the lower divisions, and in fact, are the same flowers with a different coronal configuration. In Dutch catalogs, they are sometimes called Collar or Butterfly Narcissus and are usually quite colorful and easy to grow. Newer introductions are amazingly beautiful.

Division 12 is the miscellaneous division, for flowers not belonging in any category listed above, usually because they have characteristics of more than one division.

Division 13 is species and wild daffodils; daffodils found in the wild.

Selecting Daffodil Bulbs

Selecting bulbs is the easiest (and hardest) thing about growing daffodils because there are so many varieties from which to choose! Perhaps a goal for new members is to try to extend the bloom season as far as you can by selecting the very earliest of the earlies and the latest of the lates. In most locations, your daffodil season will extend to two full months – *or more!* – of beautiful flowers at a time of year when not much else is blooming.

Daffodils can be purchased many places, but rather than impulse buying at the grocery or hardware store, or pawing through open bins at the garden center, we recommend purchasing bulbs mail-order from specialty bulb growers, pages 17-18. This gives you not only more time to make your selections, but also offers a much broader variety than can be found locally.

It is probably not wise to invest in expensive varieties at first. If you want to show your flowers, look for flowers with a good track record on the show bench using the *Journal*, or choose ADS Pannill Award winners.

The American Daffodil Society has two lists of bulbs which are useful to all growers. One is the **Wister Award** winners for tried and true flowers that grow just about anywhere in the US, and in about any situation: in the woods, public plantings, naturalizing or among perennials. Some of these Wisters are also appropriate for show, but for the list of prime show flowers, use the list of **Pannill Award** winners. The Pannills have been deemed best flowers for show throughout the US, and in fact often win Best in Show, but they may not grow well in every situation.

If your bulb order arrives before it's time to plant, open the box and lay the bulb packages out on a table in a cool room with maximum air circulation until planting time. Only plant firm bulbs.

Planting Daffodils

Plant daffodils in a sunny situation¹ with their basal plates² six inches deep³, in cool⁴, deep friable soil⁵ with good drainage⁶ and then water and mulch⁷.

Sounds easy enough, but what does it *mean*?

¹Delving deeper into that sentence, a sunny situation in Spring may not be a sunny situation in Summer. That's ok. Daffodils only need sun when the foliage is growing above ground, which is spring for most varieties.

²The basal plate is the place where the roots emerge. Place this flat end of the bulb down, *i.e.*, plant the pointy end up. Always firmly seat the bulb when planting.

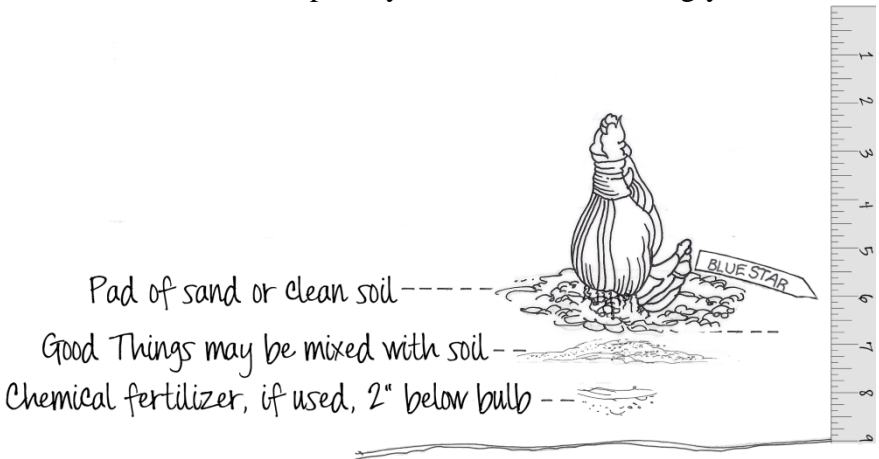
³Six inches deep to the base of the bulb is the rule of thumb, but perhaps the “three times the height of the bulb” rule is more accurate in case you ever acquire small bulbs, whether they be miniature daffodils or very small excess bulbs from a friend.

⁴You'll find that your daffodils will be happiest planted after the soil has cooled which is usually after the first frost. Root growth occurs when the soil temperature is in the range of 40-60 degrees. Bulbs planted too early in warm wet soil are subject to infection from basal rot (*Fusarium oxysporum* f. *sp. narcissi*) which will kill them and leave the soil with dormant fungus spores for several years. Daffodils enjoy about six weeks rooting time before the ground freezes. Never plant more daffodils in spots where they have mysteriously disappeared without first removing the soil and replacing with fresh.

⁵Deep friable soil may sound like an English garden book, but it makes the daffodils so happy to have a nice deep root run. You can use pine bark fines, or chopped and mulched leaves, or

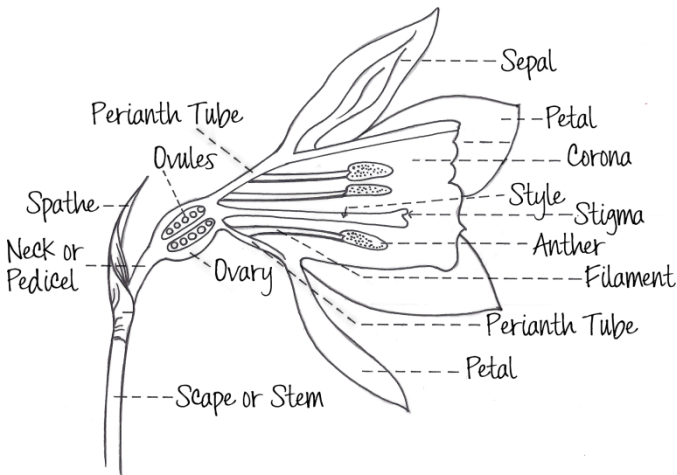
other clean organic material to lighten clay and provide moisture retention for sandy soils. In other words, don't use bacteria-ridden animal manures to modify soil for daffodils.

Some growers put a little something extra *under* bulbs at planting time: A teaspoon per bulb of Greensand, alfalfa meal, rock phosphate (or colloidal phosphate), seaweed (or kelp) and/or sand, mixed into the soil beneath the bulb, are all *Good Things*. These natural, slow-release fertilizers are mixed with loose soil down in the hole and then the bulbs are firmly seated on a pad of sand or good soil. To improve drainage, sharp sand, or the more exotic expanded shale &/or Turface® are ideal. Keep in mind that daffodils have simple roots that go straight down, only flaring out slightly, and the first thing those roots meet when they come out of the bulb in the fall should not be a chemical fertilizer, so place your fertilizer accordingly.



⁶Daffodils are hardy Mediterranean plants, and as such, they do not like water when they are dormant, meaning when they are not in growth, either rooting or growing above ground. Never plant daffodils where water stands, or *in a place targeted by an automatic sprinkler system*, and also, watch for low spots *after* planting bulbs — sometimes a low spot is made unintentionally.

Parts of a Daffodil Flower



The Perianth refers to the 3 sepals and the 3 petals

In addition to the traditional flower parts, the daffodil has two particular parts, the names of which may be new to you: The petals are collectively called the **perianth** (*PAIR ee anth*) and the trumpet or cup is called the **corona** (*kor OH nuh*).

Keeping the Names with the Bulbs

Probably the hardest thing about growing daffodils is keeping the names not only with bulbs, but also with the flowers. There is always double duty! In the spring one needs to know the names of the flowers to learn about them as individuals. In the summer-fall, though, one needs the name of the **bulb**. There are as many tagging methods as there are daffodil growers, and asking around will yield all kinds of useful ideas. In the interim, we suggest using a marker such as the Paw Paw “E” Rose Marker (a zinc garden marker with legs that go through the nameplate) for the flowers, above ground. You can use a china marker or P-Touch® label to display the name and color code of the flower on it. A white plastic knife or plastic vinyl tag,

perhaps one cut from a set of vinyl mini blinds, written with a Sharpie® or paint pen, will work to keep the names with the bulbs if it is simply planted horizontally in the hole a little higher than the base of the bulb(s), *see diagram, p. 7*. You may think you'll remember, or you may think you don't care, but someday you might, and it's so easy to add a plastic nametag in the hole with the bulbs at planting time where it will remain safe and secure, and out of the way, until you lift your bulbs.

Note: If you use a black Sharpie® marker, be aware that the ink will not wash away underground, but it will fade away to nothing if left exposed to direct sunlight.

⁷The final step to planting is usually watering and mulching, but the soil temperature needs to be cool – between 40 and 56 degrees – before watering. Daffodils need an inch of water a week while rooting, and if the skies don't provide it, then it's up to the grower. Some growers in the southern parts of Z3-7 wait until the ground is frozen to spread their mulch, while those in the northern zones need to mulch right away to prevent the ground from freezing too fast. Mulch moderates the soil temperature in all seasons and conserves moisture. It helps roots from breaking (heaving) during thaws and frosts and does a great job of keeping the flowers clean through bloom season. It also keeps weeds to a minimum. Pre-emergent herbicides (Preen®) are not especially recommended right over daffodils, though they can be used nearby.

As the first green spears emerge, it may be spring, but it may be the dead of winter, too. Daffodils, other than *tazettas*, are built to withstand cold weather, but if you're able to, throw some extra mulch over them if temperatures are forecasted to plummet to the 20s. It's better for the plant if the sun doesn't hit the frozen foliage. Remember to remove it, or simply push it aside, when the weather moderates and growth commences.

When things warm up and the foliage really starts growing, daffodils appreciate extra water, which conveniently falls from the skies at this time of year in most parts of the country. One inch per week is a good average, but if it doesn't fall, good growers will go to Plan B, which is pulling out the hoses or watering cans. Daffodils also appreciate a little boost of food at this time, too, and the trick to successfully feeding them is to know your own soil. In general, though, keep the nitrogen low, the phosphorous medium, and the potassium high. The N-P-K scale, which appears on all fertilizer labels in the US, will aid you in your search. For instance, Miracle-Gro® All-Purpose has a NPK ratio of 24-8-16, and is unacceptable as daffodil fertilizer because of the high nitrogen; look for something like 5-10-20 with micronutrients.

As the stems lengthen it's time to watch the weather forecasts for gusty wind and heavy rain and also for high heat and blazing sun; both combinations are enemies of daffodils and other spring-flowering bulbs. If your growing locale is prone to hot dry wind and blazing sun, consider planting in partial shade in a protected spot, or constructing a temporary screen if you plan to show your flowers.

Hail is catastrophic and most often appears with no warning at all, but temperatures in the low 20s are usually forecasted, and a cardboard carton placed over a particularly special clump may work if a brick is placed on top to keep it in place. Be extra careful when taking the box off the clump, or you may undo whatever good you accomplished!

It is at this time, just before and during bloom, that you'll want to walk your property and see where the sun is hitting. The south side under a large pine may surprise you. Keep an eye on that spot for another two months and mark the area that is still

sunny through May. It's a perfect place for Div. 5 (*triandrus* hybrids) and Div. 6 (*cyclamineus* hybrids) plants.

To Pick or Not to Pick?

Pick them, enjoy them, have breakfast with them! Give them as gifts, use to decorate for a baby shower, or put them on your desk at work. If you write the names on the stems with a ballpoint pen, as you pick, you'll know the exact name if someone asks about a particular variety. They can buy it themselves, or maybe you can offer to dig one of yours and share it with them. (We hope our members will be infectious carriers of the disease commonly known as "Yellow Fever".)

Having the names on the cut stems also means you can start learning about your flowers in the comfort of your own home. Have you ever looked deeply into a pink daffodil corona? Sometimes there are geometric markings, barely visible unless you really look closely, and having that flower picked and in a vase allows you to do just that. Look at the frill or flange on your large cup. Isn't it interesting how it's just a little bit lighter (or darker) in color? Another one may be split in six perfect little scallops. Pull it out of the vase and look at the name on the stem, and get to know your daffodils one by one.

It is at this time you may start to wonder if there is a pink daffodil with a white scalloped edge, and you might have the idea of crossing those two flowers. To do this, just put the pollen of the one you picked on the sticky stigma of other kind still growing in the garden. It isn't hard to get daffodil seed, and only a few years or a little more until those planted seeds yield a blooming flower. If you have the space, go for it! For more information on hybridizing, look at the old *Journals* in DaffLibrary.org or ask for guidance locally or on Daffnet.org.

Daffodils as Cut Flowers

Daffodils make good cut flowers, but we don't really cut them because of possible virus transference from the knife blade; we *pick* them with our fingers. If you pick a daffodil and find it stretches instead of snaps, you haven't watered it enough, or it's the wrong time of day. Daffodils may be poisonous to some other flowers, and to themselves, as well. For longest vase life, the poisonous daffodil exudate (*EKS yoo dayt*), which is the viscous liquid inside the stem, should be diluted by changing the water several times before arranging. Because of their thin-walled, hollow stems, daffodils do not do well in oasis; however, pin holders, glass domes and vases work well. Aspirin, sugar, and commercial additives may help flowers last a wee bit longer, but lowering the ambient temperature is the real key to longer lasting cut flowers. During the day the flowers can be displayed, but at night should be stashed away in the refrigerator, cold garage, or basement for longest vase life.

Joining a Local Daffodil Society

It is so much fun to join a local Daffodil society. There are awesome, like-minded individuals who not only know about daffodils, but other plants as well. A list of local societies, sorted first by region, then by state, can be found at DaffodilUSA.org → About Us. Dues are usually nominal, and meetings are usually informative and offer local information and growing tips. Fall meetings usually include a bulb exchange, and that alone makes a local society worth joining. Most members of local societies are also members of the American Daffodil Society; however, it is not mandatory, and in fact, there is no actual relationship between the local societies and the American Daffodil Society, save the status of the accredited Daffodil Show.

The Daffodil Show

A daffodil show is a great place to see the vast array of varieties which do well in your area. The entries are all labeled with the flower's name and that of the exhibitor. Make a list of the ones you love and include their color codes, star the ones you must have, and then start looking for a way to acquire them, or similar ones, for your garden. You'll find flowers from a wide range of prices sporting blue ribbons, depending on the criteria of the class and the timeless quality of the cultivar.

Do you grow your daffodils as well as you can? Are they as large and as colorful as the ones at the show? If they aren't, you can learn a lot from exhibitors. Does the amazing color from that blue ribbon winner come from a special fertilizer? Or is it a superior cultivar? Ask the exhibitor!

ADS National Conventions

After reading the Daffodil Journals and seeing the beautiful flowers, it may surprise you to learn those same authors, exhibitors, photographers and hybridizers are at our conventions, and they are real "down to earth" people who are happy to meet you. Conventions consist of the daffodil and photography show, garden tours, lectures/ symposia, meals, bulb auction and boutique. There is usually a reception for new members you'll want to attend. The staging room is open all night before the show, and it's a must to stop in and see, if only to see the exhibitors and the thousands of daffodils standing in every conceivable vessel of water that can be found at a hotel, waiting their turn to be groomed and staged. The best method of learning the techniques of exhibiting is to watch experienced growers in action. They each have a tool box at hand with its contents of must-have supplies, and if asked, most will gladly

share tips of how they stage flowers for their best presentation on the bench. In the evening, exhibitors are not as tense as you might think, and there is a lot of fun and lively conversation. The following morning, though, when entry time is getting short, chit chat is probably best avoided.

During Bloom to After Bloom to Senescence (*si NES ens*)

During bloom is also the time to evaluate your daffodils and decide which of them should be moved, which should be dug and divided, and which should be replaced by the newer, better, brighter, or bigger. Use surveyor's stretchable tape to wrap around the base of the clumps, or put a flag on your above-ground name marker for smaller clumps. It's also time to decide where your new bulbs will go. Should you cultivate a brand new bed, or slip them into existing beds?

Some growers feed a high potassium fertilizer at ¼-½ strength directly after bloom, and it is good to keep watering for another 4-5 weeks if rainfall is inadequate (less than an inch per week), but don't overdo the watering as the daffodils are winding down their year.

Do Not Tie or Braid Foliage to Tidy Up the Garden

As the daffodils start going down, meaning either the foliage literally lies down, or it simply turns yellow, a lot is going on underground. The green energy from the leaves is reversing and going back into the bulb, making the bulbs bigger and stronger. Never restrict that movement by tying foliage to make it look nicer. This phase does not last long, but if you don't care for the look of it, choose varieties with thin foliage such as jonquils, or choose another place to plant your bulbs. One such place is a woodland edge if you're sure enough sun will shine on the

daffodils from emergence through bloom time and another six weeks after that. The southern side of a deciduous woods is perfect; eastern and western exposures should work, too. Alternatively, drought-tolerant annuals, biennials and perennials will help camouflage the declining foliage.

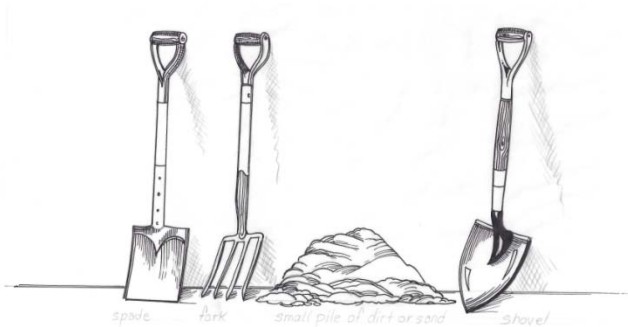
Daffodils in the Garden

Some daffodils do not play well with other plants and need a specialized spot, white trumpets, for example, but for the most part, daffodils purchased from the Dutch bulb companies, page 18, make fine additions to the perennial bed, adding early color at a time when most perennials are just breaking ground. For a refined list of good garden flowers, no matter your region, choose bulbs from the ADS Wister Award Winners, listed on the DaffodilUSA.org website. Choose companion plants that aren't rampant growers and won't need (much) summer watering. Perennials such as Columbine, Thalictrum, Geranium and Balloon Flower will do nicely, as will self-sowing annuals and biennials: Larkspur, Nigella, Moss Roses, Johnny Jump-ups, and Marigolds. The prostrate growth habit of Wave® Petunias will cover a lot of area, and they flower all summer, shading the bulbs, but the roots themselves are well behaved and once rooted in, don't require much moisture during the summer. A perennial garden is also a great place to plant show flowers from certain divisions: Div. 3, Div. 7, and Div. 9. In case you didn't know, Daffodils are poisonous to rodents and deer do not find them tasty.

Lifting Daffodils

Daffodils need to be dug and divided, or lifted, as we like to say, when the bloom has declined in either quantity or size. It's not good to dig bulbs before they ripen, but it's much worse to blindly cut into a clump with your fork or spade, so most people

dig while the foliage is still visible and only half-ripened. Leave the foliage on the bulbs, shake any soil off the bulbs, and put the whole thing in a long onion bag with its plastic nametag. The foliage will turn tan, and dry up, and it is at that time you can safely remove it from the bulb and tie the bag closed. Store bulbs with a *lot* of air circulation in the shade, whether in the house, in the shed, under a huge tree or on bakery racks on the north side of the covered porch. Use a fan or the wind to keep air moving. Finding this “sweet spot” to cure bulbs on your property will be very important in the course of your daffodil hobby, and will likely be a trial and error effort, hopefully using the older, cheaper, garden center bulbs until the best method is found.



From left to right: A Spade, a Fork, a pile of sand, and a Shovel. Use the spade or fork for daffodil bulbs, and save the shovel for the sand.

After Senescence

Daffodils have gone down and the leaves in the garden have turned tan. While it may be best to rake up the foliage, being careful not to displace the above-ground name markers, it isn't absolutely necessary. Just fill in the holes left by the foliage, freshen the mulch, and then push down and tidy up the name markers. The season is over, although there is still about a

months' worth of growing underground. Feel free to turn your attentions to other endeavors, perhaps reading daffodil catalogs?

Daffodil Catalogs

The current group of specialty daffodil bulb sellers in the US is comprised of single family proprietors, not huge operations with many employees. Getting a list means literally getting a typed list of what's for sale that year with no photos, although some email lists have clickable links to Daffseek. Those with a star (*) also list their own introductions.

US Specialty Daffodil Bulb Sellers

Lists do not come out all at once; they range in delivery from March - October. Buyers will print the order form and mail it with a personal check for most of these companies.

***Bill the Bulb Baron**

Bill Welch, 1031B Cayuga Street, Santa Cruz, CA 95062
Specializes in tazettas. List offered online starting in Sept./Oct.
www.billthebulbbaron.com

***Cherry Creek Daffodils**

Steve Vinisky, 21700 S.W. Chapman Rd, Sherwood, OR 97140
Online ordering from website – takes credit cards.
Online color catalog www.cherrycreekdaffodils.com

Daffodils & More

David Burdick, PO Box 495, Dalton, MA 01227
List offered online www.daffodilsandmore.com and by mail.
Write or email David@DaffodilsandMore.com

Joe Hamm Daffodils

Joe Hamm, 99 Maple Road, Washington, PA 15301
Specializes in Historic daffodils, but lists modern ones, too.

Call or email for a list. Joe Hamm1@juno.com (724) 345-3762)

Jon's Mini-codiums and More

Jon Kawaguchi, 3524 Bowman Ct., Alameda, CA 94502
mogeura@aol.com

***Oakwood Daffodils**

Dr. John Reed, 2330 W. Bertrand Road, Niles, MI 49120
Comprehensive listing of daffodils.
Email oakwooddaff@hughes.net for a list.

PHS (Professional Horticultural Services)

Jason Delaney, P.O. Box 6061, St. Louis, MO 63139-0061
Hard-to-find classic, historic, and novelty varieties.
Email bulbboy@icloud.com for a list.

***South Mountain Flower Farm**

Kate & Mitch Carney, 5906 Clevelandtown Rd., Boonsboro, MD
21712 Specialty and exhibition quality daffodils.
Email mca1062357@aol.com for a list

To see a paper catalog with color pictures, one must get on the mailing list of a Dutch bulb importer. They often list tried and true older varieties as well as a few more modern ones. Preference should be given to suppliers that send true-to-name varieties.

♥**Brent and Becky's Bulbs**, www.brentandbeckysbulbs.com*

♥*We'd appreciate it if you'd use the www.bloominbucks.com address when ordering (There is no 'g' in "bloominbucks") and choose Indiana Daffodil Society as your organization. IDS receives a substantial percentage on your **entire** order, not just daffodils.)*

Living Gardens, www.livinggardens.com

McClure and Zimmerman, www.mzbulb.com

John Scheepers, Inc., www.johnscheepers.com

Old House Gardens, www.oldhousegardens.com

The Throckmorton Color Code

One of the most unique things about the ADS is the daffodil color code, which we use so often it is almost part of the name. The Color Code is assigned to the flower by the hybridizer or registrant at the time of introduction. The letters stand for colors:

Y = Yellow

P = Pink

R = Red

G = Green

W = White

O = Orange



Trumpet Warrior
1YYW-WWY
1 2 3-4 5 6

The color code contains the Division (by number) followed by letters describing the perianth color(s) from tip, mid-zone, to base, followed by a hyphen, and a second set of letters describing the corona color(s) from eye, to mid- zone, to rim.

As you add to your collection, you will find that not all the flowers in your garden will precisely match their color codes. Sun, cold, and general geographic location can all affect

color. The photos in Daffseek.org can be particularly helpful in determining whether your flower is true-to-name, and common sense will help you, too; if it's supposed to be Y-Y and your bloom is W-W, it's most likely a misnamed bulb. The code always stays the same, even if your flowers don't match it.

I am reminded to say, it's probably best not to plant flowers of similar color codes right next to each other in the event they multiply quickly and grow together.