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Trumpet daffodils planted among evergreens

Learn the basic types
for increased enjoyment of . . .

DAFFODILS

Mary Lou Gripshover

(Corrections made to conform to author's manuscript.)

Let me begin by answering that age-old question of new gardeners: "What is the difference between a daffodil, a narcissus and a jonquil?" Narcissus is the botanical name and daffodil is the common English name for the entire genus *Narcissus*, and the two terms may be used interchangeably. Jonquil, however, is properly employed only for one small group within the genus which includes *N. jonquilla*, several related species, and their hybrids. Call them all daffodils and you'll never be wrong.

Daffodils come in a surprising array of sizes, from half-inch-wide flowers on three-inch stems to five-inch flowers on

two-foot stems. Colors include yellow, white, orange and pink in various combinations.

The yellow trumpets as a group, the cyclamineus hybrids and some jonquil hybrids are all early bloomers. Poeticus hybrids bring the season to a close. By a judicious selection of varieties it is possible to have daffodils in bloom over a six-week period, and even longer in mild areas of the country where spring comes early.

Growing Them

Daffodil culture can be as easy or as complicated as you choose to make it. The serious showbench competitor will double

dig the beds, incorporate soil conditioners and balanced fertilizer and put the best soil under the bulbs. Bulbs for naturalizing, however, can be dropped in a hole dug with a mattock (a soil punch) and covered

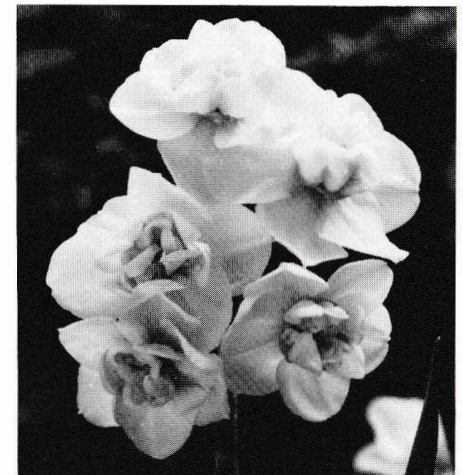
with soil. The daffodil, tough bulb that it is, will grow in either case. But the better care you are willing to give your plants, the better blooms you can expect.

As a rule, the bulbs should be planted

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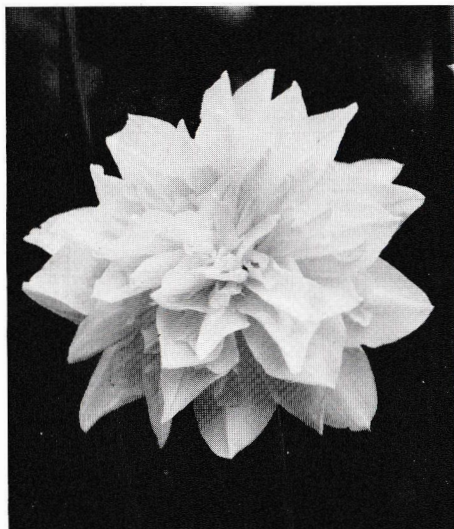
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Above left, a triandrus (three-flowered) daffodil, 'Thalia'. Above right, a double daffodil, 'Cheerfulness', has multiple flowers on each stem. Below *Narcissus poeticus* 'Actea' has a small, brilliant red-edged yellow eye, as do most of the poet's narcissus.

Gottischo-Schleisner





Above left, 'Rip Van Winkle', a miniature with very double blooms. Above right, 'Tête-à-Tête', another dwarf, and one that bears flowers in pairs. Below, one of the first of the pink-cupped daffodils, 'Mrs. R.O. Backhouse'.



about one spade's depth—six to eight inches (three to four inches for miniature bulbs). Large bulbs should be spaced six inches apart, small ones three inches apart. Superphosphate or the milder bone meal mixed in with the soil under the bulb will provide the necessary nutrients for the first year or two. If desired, an annual feeding of a balanced fertilizer low in nitrogen can

be applied as a top dressing in spring or fall. Water seems to be the single most important factor in producing top quality bloom. During the bulbs' growing season—from autumn rooting until the foliage dies in late spring—an inch of rain a week is not too much. But please don't plant the bulbs where water stands for long periods. In a waterlogged soil the bulbs are likely to rot. Plant them where they will receive sunlight for at least part of the day. The dense shade beneath evergreens or on the north side of a building is not recommended.

The culture for miniatures is similar to that of the standard sized daffodils. However, because the tiny species daffodils, like many wildflowers, require special growing conditions, a novice gardener who likes miniature daffodils is advised to begin with hybrids such as 'Tête-à-Tête', 'Jumble', 'Sundial', 'Hawera', 'WeeBee' and 'Minnow', which are reliable as well as widely available.

Pink daffodils (pink cup, white perianth), once only a gleam in the hybridizers' eyes, are now a reality, and many excellent varieties are available. They include 'Mrs. R.O. Backhouse', a large-cupped narcissus with white petals and an apricot-pink cup. (Continued on p. 33)

All photos: Malak/Netherlands Flower-bulb Institute

Bulbs in the Landscape



Right, dwarf iris, leucojum and primrose with azalea. Below, drifts of naturalized daffodils line the bank of a lake.



Gottschalk-Schleier

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Above left, hyacinths and grape-hyacinths (Muscari) with Narcissus triandrus albus (below) and N. jonquilla simplex (above). Below left, daffodils and poet's narcissus with lemon yellow broom and deep green evergreens. Above, blue-veined white puschkinias interplanted with Praestans 'Fusilier' tulips, a multiflowered variety.



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Not Many Problems

Daffodils are relatively disease- and pest-free. Viruses, characterized by yellow or white striping on the foliage, are noted occasionally. There is no known cure; the best protection is to dig and discard diseased plants. Basal rot is a problem in warm climates. As a preventive measure, bulbs may be dipped in a Benlate solution before planting. Once infected, there is no cure; but a particularly choice bulb may be salvaged by cutting away all rotted tissue and dusting the cut surfaces with Benlate.

The only other major pest is the narcissus bulb fly, which lays its eggs in late spring at the base of the foliage. The larva tunnels down to the base of the bulb, enters through the basal plate and eats the interior of the bulb. It then spends the winter in a pupal state and emerges the following spring. The U.S. Department of Agriculture recommends using Dylox R as a soil drench in spring at the onset of fly activity. Fortunately, most of us will never see any of these pests.

Adaptability and Uses

Some daffodils will grow almost anywhere in this country, but not all daffodils will grow everywhere. Tazetta hybrids, which have two to four flowers to a stem and are sweetly scented, are well suited for the

South but ^{may not} ~~won't~~ survive severe winters in the North. *N. jonquilla*, another daffodil with a number of multiflowering varieties, is common in the South but "iffy" in areas where winters drop consistently below freezing. Its hybrids, however, are usually quite hardy in the North. *N. poeticus*, daffodils with small cups edged in red, are native to alpine meadows of Europe, and its hybrids usually thrive best in a cool climate.

Daffodils may be planted in clumps in the perennial border and between shrubs, naturalized in fields or open woods, in fact, anywhere a breath of spring is wanted. Choose an early-blooming variety and plant it where its earliness can be appreciated—perhaps to greet visitors at your front door. Plant daffodil bulbs any way you choose, except in straight lines like a row of soldiers at attention. Wherever they are planted, the foliage should be allowed to ripen naturally for a minimum of six weeks after flowering. Please—no braiding, no tying, and above all no cutting off of untidy leaves. If the foliage can't be tolerated in a particular spot, choose another spot for planting.

One last note on landscaping with daffodils—avoid mixing varieties in a clump. A more pleasing effect can be obtained by planting three to a dozen bulbs each of contrasting varieties and dividing them only when necessary, usually after four to six years. ❀

CROCUS "T"

There is bloom outdoors twelve months a year at the Brooklyn Botanic Garden, though the pickings can be lean at New Year's. The first bulb to flower is a little species crocus from Yugoslavia, *Crocus tomasinianus*, which was planted originally on the west side of the grounds in the 1920s. It has made itself thoroughly at home, spreading by seed and corm at a pace faster than hungry squirrels can keep up with. Call it Crocus "T" for short.

Crocus "T" begins to flower in late January some years, February or March in others, depending on the severity of the winter. Like most winter bulbs it blooms a lengthy time, a month or five weeks, and the small flowers, which appear in various shades of lavender, seem immune to deep freezes. As with all crocuses they close on cloudy days, and fertilization occurs underground, which makes eminent good sense for a winter bloomer. In time, bulbs form large drifts—a meadow garden in midwinter. Corms cost a pittance. Crocus "T" is the best crocus for naturalizing, so why not plant them in numbers? ❀