

The National Garden Bureau declared 2017 as the Year of the Daffodil. So plant them this fall to get the full effect next spring. Pixabay photo

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## Garden Tips: Get ready to celebrate the Year of the Daffodil

BY MARIANNE OPHARDT

*Garden Tips*



Monkeys, dogs, pigs and dragons. All of them have their years in the Chinese calendar.

Come on down, daffodil, it's your turn.

The National Garden Bureau (NGB) has declared 2017 as the “Year of the Daffodil.”

The NGB was started in 1920 to “educate, inspire, and motivate people to increase the use of plants in their homes, gardens, and workplaces.” This non-profit organization’s goals are the same today. Each year the NGB picks one type of easy-to-grow bulb, annual, perennial, and edible plant on which to focus their efforts. This year, it’s the daffodil.

Now is the perfect time to talk about this cheery spring flowering bulb because gardeners should be getting ready to plant daffodils and other spring flowering bulbs soon. However, before we discuss the bulb of the year, we need to discuss why spring flowering bulbs are planted in the fall.

Spring flowering bulbs are considered hardy bulbs because in temperate climates like ours they spend the winter in the ground. Not only do they endure the cold, they require a certain amount of it to enable their bloom in the spring. Generally, daffodils need about 13 weeks of cool soil temperatures (35 to 45 degrees) before they can flower in the spring.

This chilling requirement and the need to develop a root system for growth in the spring is why it is important to plant bulbs in the fall when the weather and soil turn cooler (60 degrees). This typically occurs in our area in mid-October. If you plant too early when the soil is warmer, the bulbs may sprout and start growing. As a result, the early sprouting bulbs may not have enough energy to develop an adequate root system to support the flowers and leaves next spring. Plus, early sprouting bulbs are more vulnerable to freeze damage.

Have you noticed that bulbs are already on the shelves of many garden and big box stores? Go ahead and buy your spring flowering bulbs now while there is a good selection, but wait for cooler weather to plant them. Until then, store your bulbs in a cool dark place.

If your bulbs come in sealed plastic packages, transfer them to labeled brown paper sacks along with their photos and descriptions. This also gives you the opportunity to inspect the bulbs for fuzzy mold and rot. Get rid of the bad ones or return them. The papery skin or “tunic” around the bulb is nature’s protection from bruises and cuts. Do not remove it.

Now back to the bulb of the year. Daffodils are native to the meadows and woody forests of Spain, Portugal, France and Austria. They reached the shores of North America via early pioneers who planted them as reminders of the homes and gardens left behind. Daffodils are still popular today because they are easy to grow, they persist from year to year, and they multiply.

I am not a daffodil expert, but the American Daffodil Society has 13 different daffodil classifications. When it comes to daffodils, I am a traditionalist and prefer the classic bright yellow trumpet daffodils with their long trumpets

surrounded by petals, such as the Mount Hood, Marieke and Dutch Master. I also like jonquils that have one to five often-scented smaller flowers per reed-like stem, such as Derringer, Intrigue and the cute miniature jonquil Sweetness.

Start shopping now for your favorite daffodils and tulips because fall should be coming soon. I hope.

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