

Daffodil Growing



Daffodils are traditional spring favourites with their bright colours after the winter gloom. From the earliest jonquils to the later season varieties, their flowering time extends over two months.

Planting – when and how

Daffodils can be planted any time from late February to the end of May. Early planting gets them off to a great start, as they will begin to develop their roots and settle in ready for spring growth.

For good results, daffodils need full sun and well-drained soil. Work the soil up deeply before planting to allow easy root development. Water the bulbs in, but no fertiliser needs to be added, as the bulbs will only be putting out roots now.

Care while growing

The first leaves will emerge in mid winter, and little care is needed at this stage. Some slug killer will prevent damage from slugs and snails as the leaves develop. When the weather gets warmer, virus-spreading aphids may become active. Occasional spraying with a general-purpose insecticide or organic alternative will help keep them under control.

Flowering

Enjoy your spring flowers in the garden or pick the flowers as the first petals are opening.

Care after flowering

Sprinkle some Diazinon granules on the soil where the leaves emerge to help keep narcissus flies away. These flies resemble small bumble

bees – they target daffodils and hyacinths to lay their eggs, which will hatch and burrow down to eat out the inside of the bulbs!

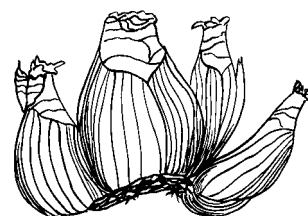
The bulbs will put all their energy into producing flowers, as nature wants them to flower and diversify through seed. After flowering, remove the old flower heads to prevent seed development. This will encourage better bulb growth and stronger flowering the following year.

It is now time for the bulb to grow and prepare for next season. Fertilise lightly, working it into the topsoil. Use a general-purpose fertiliser or a special bulb fertiliser. Compost and old animal manure are also useful, but don't use fresh animal manure as it has too much nitrogen, which can encourage disease. Good bulb fertilisers are high in potassium to enhance flower colour, and low in nitrogen.

Resist the temptation to tidy up and remove the leaves, the bulbs need these now to take back the nutrients for storage. Allow them to die back naturally and remove them only when they have gone dry.

Lifting and separating

Daffodils can be left in the ground for up to four years before they become too crowded. If a clump is producing a lot of leaves but not many flowers, dig the



bulbs in December when they are dormant. After drying the bulbs for a couple of weeks, split the offsets apart and store them in a cool airy place before replanting in early autumn.