

Daffodil: Late winter/spring flowering bulbs are showing up in nurseries now. Often one asks “what is the difference between a Daffodil, Narcissus or Jonquil”? Narcissus is the Latin or botanical word for Daffodil. Daffodil is the common name for all members of the genus Narcissus, which includes Jonquils, Paper Whites etc. According to the American Daffodil Society, the Daffodil data bank has over 13,000 varieties and approximately 25 species. This means for us, an endless variety of colors shapes and sizes that bring smiles to our faces every spring.

Size: Depends on variety

Exposure: Full sun to partial shade. Flowers will turn to face the sun.

How to Plant: Dig a hole one-and-a-half times deeper than the length of the bulb. Beneath the bulb, mix in a little bone meal or bulb fertilizer, with a little compost over that. Space about 5” apart. PLANT WITH THE POINTED END UP. Cover with soil and water. In the hottest areas, plant in late September through fall. To plant in pots; put daffodil tips just below the surface and cover with gravel or mulch, then water. Place in a cool place until growth starts, normally 6-8 weeks. Do not over water or let stand in water: bulbs will rot.

Water needs: Water after planting. Fall/winter rain should be enough for good growth. If no or low natural water is available in winter, they will take supplemental watering with no problems. They are very forgiving as long as they don’t stand in water.

Soil: Fast draining, good growing soil is best. Heavier soil is ok, but it is best to amend with well rotted manure or compost. In heavy soil try planting on a slope and plant a little shallower. In fast draining soils or very hot climates plant a little deeper.

Pruning needs: Do not cut off leaves after bloom! The leaves must die back naturally, since they provide the nutrients to the bulb for next year.

Snapshot: Daffodils are a permanent planting and continue to multiply yearly in good conditions, so they are perfect for naturalizing. Plant in swaths under the drip line of large trees and flowering shrubs. They are cold hardy and do not require summer watering. Daffodils bulbs are poisonous, so most deer and gophers don’t find them appetizing, which make them perfect for our Calaveras/Tuolumne area. Choose plump, firm bulbs that feel heavy for their size. The varieties are endless, but it has been suggested that some varieties do better in hotter areas.

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