



FACT SHEET

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 as long as there is some moisture in the soil. 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 such as neem sprays 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

Neem granules should be sprinkled on the soil where the leaves emerge to help keep narcissus flies away from mid spring. These flies resemble small bumble bees – they target daffodils and

hyacinths to lay their eggs, which will hatch and burrow down to eat the centre of the bulbs, damaging the embryonic flower bud so there would be no flowers the following year.

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

After flowering is the time to fertilise lightly to boost bulb growth. Working fertiliser into the few cm of soil and water it in. Use a general-purpose fertiliser or a special bulb fertiliser. Compost and old animal manure can help, but tend to provide nitrogen and little else. Don't use fresh animal manure as the nitrogen content 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.

