

# Daffodil Growing Guidelines

## General Guidelines for Growing Daffodils

Daffodils are some of the easiest plants to grow. Some daffodils will grow in most parts of the United States, but not all daffodils will grow everywhere. Jonquil hybrids and tazettas do better in the South, as do the little bulbocodium hybrids, while the poeticus hybrids are usually happier where it's a little colder. For starters, buy your bulbs from a trusted source. A good bulb has a flower in it when it is sold for autumn planting. Bargain bulbs from other than reputable dealers are not bargains. Never buy or plant a soft daffodil bulb, because a soft bulb usually means basal rot or other disease.

Daffodils will grow in light shade, but do better in full sun. Deep shade keeps them from blooming after the first year or two. They will grow well in most soils, but need plenty of moisture from the time they are planted until they finish growing in the late spring. A good soaking once a week is not too much. However, the soil must drain well. During the soil preparation, a complete fertilizer, low in nitrogen, (3-6-6 or 5-10-10) should be worked in (about 1/4 cup per square foot). Be sure the fertilizer does not come in direct contact with the bulbs. Never use fresh manure. Forget the bonemeal; it takes too long to breakdown to ever be beneficial.

Daffodils should be planted in September, or when the soil has cooled, or any time until the ground freezes. Most root growth is done in the fall and early winter. In cold-winter climates, bulbs of normal size should be planted about six inches deep. Smaller bulbs should be planted about 3 times their height. A shallow planting will require more frequent lifting and division as the bulbs tend to split up more quickly.

Don't cut the leaves from your plants, since they are essential for building next year's flower. If you need a few to go with some daffodils in a vase, cut a leaf here and there, but never all from one plant. And don't tidy up the garden by cutting off or braiding sprawling green foliage after flowering. The plant needs those leaves! When the foliage has yellowed or dried up, you may remove it, and cultivate the ground a bit, so that insects do not have a path down the hole left by the foliage directly to the bulbs.

Daffodil bulbs divide, and one bulb will in time become a clump of bulbs. They should be dug and divided when the flowers become smaller and fewer (about every 4-5 years). Dig as the foliage turns yellow, store until fall in a cool, airy place. Do not forcefully break the side shoots off of the bulbs.

A mulch gives bulbs a longer, better growing season. It also keeps the flowers clean and helps to make the ground cooler in summer. Shredded bark, straw, or pine straw are all good.

Now check below for some more area-specific growing guidelines.

## **Growing Daffodils in New Mexico**

**Debra Vigil Braidwood**

Yes, we have them and they are beautiful. But if you want them to resemble those you would find on a show bench, then be prepared to water...water...water! That is one of the most important ingredients in raising daffodils in New Mexico.

Our rainfall amounts to an average of between seven and nine inches annually. Very seldom is there enough spring rain to support growth. Having an irrigation system or a well is a must. In addition to an overhead sprinkler system, I have rain barrels to collect that precious run off. Gallon buckets are placed under most of my faucets for water that would normally go down the drain while we're waiting for the water to heat up. This water I distribute to my favorite clumps two or three times a week once the foliage shows above the ground.

The shortage of rainfall has resulted in a much different method of fertilizing. Nutrients don't have the opportunity to leach down to the base of the bulb. To account for this, it is very important to make sure adequate fertilizer is placed just below the root zone. When planting, I prepare the soil an additional two inches below the bulb. Into this soil I mix in slightly more granular 3-3-12 fertilizer than is recommended. In addition to this initial treatment, I use a liquid 15-30-15 fertilizer for foliar feeding every other week when the foliage is actively growing. This must sound labor intensive to the rain saturated west coast and midwest growers. However, there are several advantages to growing here in New Mexico.

Most of our soils are made up of decomposed granite. This results in a very freely draining soil. And we all know how our daffodils do enjoy that. In certain circumstances when a heavy clay mix has been used as back fill, the commonly available soil amendment called perlite, can be used below the bulb to create a pocket for drainage. To my knowledge, I have only lost one clump of daffodils to basal rot in the ten years that I have been growing. This was Clearwater. Bulb fly? Shhhhhh! If they're here, this grower hasn't caught one in her yard yet. And for you lazy growers, you will be glad to know that on the average daffodils in New Mexico only need dividing once every four or five years. If you have a favorite bulb that you want to share, you can usually count on an increase within two years. This is not to say that we don't have real producers here. The Jonquils seem to thrive and I for one am grateful to their reproductive abandon.

That seems to be the long and short of growing here. Although I should probably include the disclaimer that my experience is limited to the Albuquerque area. Friends in Los Alamos, New Mexico have slightly more rainfall and the altitude difference changes the zone from a six to a five. Gee, what I could do with the extra water!!!

## **Growing Daffodils within the Mid-Atlantic Region**

### **Clay Higgins**

The Mid-Atlantic Region is blessed with an excellent climate for growing all divisions of daffodils, and cursed with generally poor hard packed red clay soil. Most of the Mid-Atlantic Region is located within Zone 7, with some touches of Coastal Zone 8 along the coastline, and some Zone 6 in the mountainous region to the west. The majority of the soil is acidic, hard packed red clay that requires considerable amendment to grow good gardens and daffodils.

I grow all thirteen divisions of daffodils, including many miniatures, at my home outdoor gardens without the benefit of a greenhouse in Maryland. I go to many of the shows in the Mid-Atlantic Region each year and I have noticed an outstanding assortment of trumpets, large cups, small cups, doubles, cyclamineus hybrids, jonquil hybrids, poet hybrids, and split corona daffodils. These divisions thrive under our colder climate and growing conditions and reproduce well when planted in amended well-drained soil. The red clay has a tendency to create a "bathtub" effect and must be well drained to reduce the damage from basal rot when the roots stay wet too long. To get the drainage that I need, I often plant in beds that are raised by heaping the soil a few inches above the surrounding area. Along the eastern shoreline of the Mid-Atlantic Region the upper divisions do very well, specially the Division 7 jonquil hybrids and Division 8 tazettas, while the cyclamineus hybrids in Division 6 seems to not do as well in the dry soils.

Divisions 5, 8, 10, 12, and 13 are also in abundance. The triandrus species daffodils in Division 13 are harder to grow as they require well-drained soil during growth and dry soil in the summer. However, I find that the hybrid daffodils in Division 5 do fairly well and multiply in well-drained soil. The division 6 cyclamineus can live in soil that is damp (not wet) all year around. Cyclamineus is happiest in soil that doesn't go dry on them. The heartier hybrids in Division 8 tazettas grow well in the Mid-Atlantic; however the tazettas listed as "paper-whites" types do not survive. There are too many tazettas to name, however one of the most successful tazettas here is 'Falconet'. Many of my tazettas will come up in the fall and get caught by the winter freezes, causing the foliage to die, although they seem to bloom year to year. The bulbocodium hybrids in Division 10 like it warmer than they generally get in the Mid-Atlantic, however, some like 'Kenellis', and Golden Bells Group do very well here. Some of the hybrid miniature bulbocodiums are so early that they will bloom in the late fall and early winter, and get caught up in our winter weather cycle. That also applies to many of the species narcissus (daffodils) in Division 13, specifically bulbocodiums, triandrus, and tazetta.

Miniature hybrid daffodils grow well in the Mid-Atlantic Region, except for the above mentioned hybrid bulbocodiums crossed with other "warm" weather bulbocodiums such as those currently popular from our down under friends. Species daffodils that are crossed with the traditional standard or miniatures in Division 1, 2, 3, 4, 7, and 9 do well here, as the crossing with the standards give them the vigor to survive the winters well.

## Growing Daffodils in New England Dianne Mrak, diannemrak@aol.com

When thinking “New England” culture, your mind might think “freezing cold;” how can you plant or protect your daffodils from those elements?!!!! But for those of us living somewhere within the New England states, we know we have a wide range of plant zones, and therefore temperatures, ranging from Zone 3 B (coldest temps around -30 to -40 degrees F) in the northern most areas and mountain areas to Zone 7 A (coldest temps between 5 to 0 degrees F) and even some years a 7B (10 degrees to 5 degrees) in southern New England and along the coastline up to New Hampshire!!!! Along the coastline of New Hampshire, for instance, we find ourselves listed in Zone 6 B (0 to -5 degrees), but in some years we are a Zone 7A!!!! Even this year with all the cold, frigid Arctic temperatures we have been having, we still remain in the Zone 6 B.

So what is a good, general rule of thumb when it comes to culture up here? Well, believe it or not, our culture is not very different from other northern and central regions.

First, our soil can range from sandy to clay, and as in most regions, soil has to be amended most of the time to produce a “good” garden loam. Adding organic material and sand/grit/small pebbles, if your soil is heavy clay, to adding organic matter and clay (if you have a source) to amend sandy soil, pretty much is the same no matter what region you are in. Preparing the soil to a depth of 12 inches, more or less, seems to help the daffodil roots grow deep.

2. When planting daffodils, finding a sunny location, with possibly late afternoon dappled shade, and well-drained soil is best. I always suggest throwing in a handful of sand/grit in the hole you’ve dug for the basal plate to sit on. Planting the bulb somewhere between 6" to 8" deep seems to work in most locations. In colder locations, I suggest putting on a layer of mulch or evergreen branches to help insulate the ground. Most of the time though, there is a fairly deep snow cover which provides good insulation. I try to begin planting my bulbs about the first week in October, however, I have planted as late as December 1st with no negative effects on the daffodils. The only exception to that is for the miniatures. Because they are so small and have less mass, they seem to do better if I plant them as soon as I can after receiving them.

3. Watering the bulbs in the spring throughout the growing season is important. However, most of the time, our springs provide us with lots of rain making the job of watering almost nonexistent. In the summer months, I have to water plants that are inter-dispersed among my daffodils; however, I do not seem to have problems with my daffodils when watering plants near the bulbs. Our ground, if it is well-drained in the first place, doesn’t seem to heat up enough, and combined with water, doesn’t seem to create basal rot problems that plague other parts of the country.

4. Fertilizing: Contrary to the accepted norm, when I plant my daffodils, I do not use bone meal because it has been found to be useless until it breaks down into the soil, which can literally, take years! Nor do I fertilize newly planted daffodils with any type of fertilizer. I believe ground that has not been used for growing daffodils before, probably contains enough natural nutrients to feed the newly planted daffodils when they begin to grow. I do fertilize them the following spring, just as the leaves are emerging from the ground, and once again, if time permits, in late spring. I use a 5-10-10 or a 10-20-20 “Potato Fertilizer” in pellet form which I hand broadcast. I do not fertilize in the fall, since my gardens consist of many other perennial plants that should not be fertilized at that time. It seems to work well for me. If I had my daffodils planted separately, I might be more inclined to fertilize them three times a year.

5. Mulch: I encourage mulching of flower beds, for several reasons. First and foremost, mulching helps the soil retain badly needed moisture in the summer. In addition, it helps keep the temperatures lower in the summer and warmer in the wintertime, especially if there isn’t a ground

cover of snow. An added benefit with some mulches, namely pinestraw, is it keeps daffodils “clean” when they come up in the spring and helps prevent soil splashing onto the flowers during rainstorms.

6. Foliage: Should remain attached to the daffodil bulb until it begins to die back. When the foliage comes off by pulling on it “gently,” the daffodil basically has gone dormant.

7. Dividing a clump of daffodils should be done when the foliage just starts turning yellow but with the foliage still very much attached to the bulb. (This is done mainly for ease in finding most of the bulbs being dug!) In this climate, you can be successful replanting the newly dug bulbs if it is done immediately. Otherwise, the bulbs can be stored in mesh bags or plain brown sandwich bags in a cool, dry place until the fall. I have found using a piece of plywood which is stood upright and stapling the bags on the wood, is by far one of the most satisfactory ways of storing and drying daffodil bulbs. The piece of plywood can be kept to the side of a garage and not be in the way, while the bulbs are kept dry and relatively cool.

8. In the fall, all of the bulbs which have been dug and have been stored during the summer, should be inspected for either bulb fly or basal rot. If the bulb is “soft,” closely examine it to make sure there isn't a bulb fly larva inside. Occasionally, certain varieties more than others, a bulb will begin to grow and “appear” soft. But if there is any doubt whether or not you have a bulb with a bulb fly larva, you are better to be safe and get rid of it (in the trash, not the compost pile), than sorry, and spreading the fly around. And unless you have only one bulb of that variety, it isn't worth the chance that it doesn't have bulb fly.

If anyone in the New England Region has any questions, problems, experiences, or suggestions on how to make it easier for people to grow daffodils in this region, please feel free to e-mail me making sure you type in the subject area, something dealing with daffodils -otherwise I might delete it as 'junk mail'!!!! Or I can be reached at 603/742-1315. Happy Daffodilling! Happy Spring!!!

## **Growing Daffodils in the Southern Region**

### **Sandra Stewart**

The Southern Region includes a wide range of climates and conditions as it includes Alabama, Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Texas and the westernmost part of Tennessee. Except the coastal areas, most places are suitable for virtually any kind of daffodil you would like to grow. The warm winters make it possible to grow many varieties outdoors that are normally grown in pots in a greenhouse.

While you should follow the general rules about planting daffodils, you can make exception to a few pointers here in the South. It is normally too warm and dry to plant daffodil bulbs until mid-October and November. Daffodils like plenty of water during the fall and winter while they are putting out roots, so you want the ground to be moist when you plant them. If you have a dry winter, you may want to water your daffodils the usual one inch of water per week. Ample water is the main ingredient for robust blooms in the spring. This is most important for doubles, which require much more water than we usually get in rainfall.

Planting your daffodils after the soil has cooled will discourage loss to basal rot – our most serious daffodil problem here in the South. You can plant daffodil bulbs anytime during the winter months that the ground isn't frozen, but earlier is better – holding bulbs out for too long causes them to dehydrate and will drain their vitality for your first year of bloom. Try to be done before Christmas. You don't have to plant daffodil bulbs as deep in the South since the ground rarely freezes.

Most daffodils in the South will tolerate some shade. Yes they do require plenty of sunshine, but normally they have grown up and bloomed before our deciduous trees and shrubs have put out all their leaves. White, yellow and pink-cupped daffodils will develop their best color faster in full sun, but red, orange and late-blooming daffodils prefer shade from noon to sundown to prevent fading and sunburn.

Mulch is very important for Southern daffodils. It will keep your soil temperature moderate and your blooms clean during spring storms, but more importantly, mulch will keep the weeds in check so you won't be tempted to mow your daffodil leaves down before they die back on their own. Pine straw is the best mulch for daffodils in the South since it won't wash during spring rains, it will discourage fire ants, it will add some acidity to your soil – and it's easy to get.

## **Growing Daffodils in Arkansas and Louisiana**

### **Thera Lou Adams**

I live in Camden, Arkansas, in Zone 8 just five miles from Zone 7 and my place is 3 ½ acres. Some is in natural woodland. The daffodils grow in this wooded area that is mostly deciduous trees, about 70 percent oaks.

Where the soil is good, using a regular shovel, I dig a hole deep enough to have about two inches of loose soil in the bottom and then I put two bulbs to the hole. If the bulbs are very big, then it's one. The hole is about eleven inches in diameter. Usually with the good soil, no amendments are added. About an inch of soil is placed over the bulb. I space the holes about twenty-two inches apart most of the time but this can vary according to the site. I like clumps better than drifts. In the area that is almost all small and larger rocks, I dig a hole about six inches deeper than in good soil and about fifteen inches in diameter. I fill this with good soil and a little fertilizer like triple 13 or 8, again putting about an inch of soil over the top of the bulb. The clay soils are treated like the rocky soils. Plain poor soil gets some top soil, partially decomposed wood chips (from tree trimmers) and a little triple 8 or 13 fertilizer. In this area I only plant heirloom bulbs or the tough kind I buy by the bushel and they are usually the large cup.

Miniatures, doubles and the butterfly types as a general rule do not do well. There are a few exceptions. Rain is the only water they receive. A few years the blooms are sparse because of the bad droughts. Roxane Daniel waters her millions of bulbs and they bloom despite droughts. I only fertilize on rare occasions when they stop blooming, but most of the time blooming stops because the clumps are too crowded or shrubs have grown over them and shaded them. Some daffodil growers tell me the oak leaves I leave on the ground as is give mine natural fertilizer. I also leave logs to decay especially on the slopes for this eliminates erosion.

The few expensive bulbs I have, and they are frail, are planted in established flower beds with many different plants with potting soil and a little triple 13 added. Some water is provided other than rain. A little fertilizer is added such as triple 13 or 8 and sometimes a high phosphorus one is used.

I move mine anytime the spirit moves me. In the last few days the temperature was around 50. The ones with buds were moved in one clump and the ones under shrubs were separated. For lack of sunshine they will not bloom this year. I do not know how clumps were growing in the path, but they were moved and the ground is very wet. The ones I move right after they quit blooming receive my usual fertilizer as it seems they do not miss the next year's bloom as they do without the fertilizer. The rains seem to help them at this time. I do not store any of my bulbs when I dig. Into they ground they go, pronto! This way I know where they are needed.

Roxane Daniel stored thousands for Master Gardeners this year and stored them on wire racks in an open type building and turned them some. Not any were lost.

The same planting I use here is used about town and country in our other plantings.

The four-acre field in Louisiana is located 120 miles south of Camden. It was once a cotton patch and then a pasture. The soil is sandy but it holds water rather well. Dark is the soil—and take this as meaning rich. Never in the 18-20 years that I have planted daffodils there has anything been added to the soil. All have grown well except miniatures, doubles, and split-coronas. The butter and egg ones were like weeds and I gave away thousands.

A small part of the area is sometimes boggy and the Daffnet [see elsewhere on this site to join Daffnet] folks gave advice about some of the older ones that should do well there.

So, now to divide. Again I move them whenever I can but I do not add anything when I move them right after they stop blooming. Also only an inch of soil is added on top of the bulbs. The only water they receive is from the skies. The awful weeds are the worst problem, but with the good information from DAFFNET maybe I can win the war.

## **Regional Growing Information on the Internet**

### **Growing Daffodils in Florida**

You will find growing information on the Florida Daffodil Society website: <http://www.fladaff.com>

### **Growing Daffodils in Minnesota**

You will find growing information on the Minnesota Daffodil Society website:  
<http://www.daffodilmn.org/>

### **Growing Daffodils in Northern California**

You will find growing information on the Northern California Daffodil Society website:  
<http://www.daffodil.org/>