

Cotswold Cottage Gardening

Thinking Ahead to Spring Daffodils

Strange as it may seem in the height of summer, this is a good time to start thinking about next spring's display, and in particular about planting daffodils. August and September are ideal for planting new bulbs, and although garden centres may not stock up until the autumn, the specialist bulb companies will be ready for business, and they offer a far wider choice - and often very attractive discounts for quantity.

Unlike some of the more exotic spring flowers, especially tulips, garden daffodils have evolved from European natives. With a few exceptions, they are well-adapted to our climate with its wetter summers, but they will not suffer from a summer baking either.

A Walk on the Wild Side

The more relaxed 'wilder' style of planting which is currently in vogue can be satisfied by looking to the smaller, simpler varieties, particularly those derived from *Cyclaminus* and *Jonquil* species. These produce flowers daintier than the traditional big yellow garden daffodils; in the *Cyclaminus* hybrids, the outer rim of petals is swept backwards instead of growing out at a right angle to the trumpet, giving them an additional grace and sense of movement. Their apparent fragility, however, is misleading; they are surprisingly tough and weatherproof, and being shorter, less likely to be felled by spring storms. Of the *Cyclaminus* division, 'February Gold' is a very early flowerer, as its name indicates (although it tends to wait until early March to really get going),



and is a cheerful golden yellow; 'February Silver' is similar in all respects, but has white tepals. These two look very attractive intermingled. 'Penril' sets its orange trumpet (properly known as the corona) against white tepals, 'Jenny' starts with a pale yellow corona, which fades to match the white of the tepals.

Pipit, Quail and Curlew

Jonquils are rounder flowers, with spreading, almost flat tepals and a shorter, broader corona than the *cyclaminus* type; they have the added bonus of being sweet-smelling, even after they are picked. The most widely available are named after birds: 'Pipit' has four soft yellow flowers to each stem, 'Quail' is a richer gold, and 'Curlew' is all white. All three are sturdy and tough, and should multiply in normal garden conditions.

Not Forgetting Tête à Tête

Finally, no cottage gardener should be without the famous 'Tête à Tête'. Only eight inches tall, this is often the first daffodil to flower, but it will often produce secondary stems to give more blooms. Its pure bright yellow looks cheerful in any border, especially when planted amongst primulas.

As a rule of thumb, all these bulbs should be planted at three times the height of the bulb; so for a two-inch high bulb, make a six-inch hole, and cover with four inches of soil. Firm the soil down, mark the spot (you don't want to dig them up by accident), and look forward to spring!

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