

"D" is for Daffodil

September is upon us. The leaves and colors of the garden are brilliant in their last displays. The sun is still shining and bright. But mornings have a touch of chill. Soon Jack Frost will tiptoe in putting to bed any remaining flowers of the summer still up and partying. Quiet will descend upon the garden. The coloring will become more subdued and staid. Did you ever know there were so many shades of brown?

The weather in the Pacific Northwest lends itself to a long winter's nap. The days are overcast, bleak and dreary with mist or rain bathing the land. The garden slumbers on forever it seems. Then in the short dark days of February, tiny green leaves begin to push their way up out of the ground. Each day they grow stronger and larger followed by a stem with a swelling flower bud that gladdens the soul when it bursts into bloom: rain or snow the daffodils bloom. Spring cannot be far behind.

Pretty picture isn't it? What a glad sight all those lovely flowers will be next spring. Do you remember this William Wordsworth poem from school?



Daffodils

I wandered lonely as a cloud
That floats on high o'er vales and hills,
When all at once I saw a crowd,
A host, of golden daffodils;
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.

Continuous as the stars that shine
And twinkle on the milky way,
They stretched in never-ending line
Along the margin of a bay:
Ten thousand saw I at a glance,
Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.

The waves beside them danced; but they
 Outdid the sparkling waves in glee:
 A poet could not but be gay,
 In such a jocund company:
 I gazed – and gazed – but little thought
 What wealth the show to me had brought:


For oft, when on my couch I lie
 In vacant or in pensive mood,
 They flash upon that inward eye
 Which is the bliss of solitude;
 And then my heart with pleasure fills,
 And dances with the daffodils







Now that you are all in the mood, this is no time to sit back and relax. Now is the time. You have to go out, buy bulbs, prepare the bed and plant all those wonderful little promises of spring in your garden now. No resting after the activities of summer. No breaks from weeding. Get up out of the chair and plant bulbs. All right, you don't have to plant them right away, but you do have to go and buy them while they're in the store. When buying bulbs, look for those that are solid and heavy, with no injury to the basal plate. Put the bag in a cool dry place and forget them for a little while. But, you have to put them into the ground in order to get that wonderful vision next spring.








Trumpet Daffodils, King Alfred variety

Daffodils, jonquils and narcissus are all narcissus. The twelve botanical divisions of narcissus are:

Example	Description	Flowering Season
	Trumpet – solitary flowers, the trumpet or cup is at least as long as the petals. Early season flowering.	Early
Narcissus 'Exception'		

Example	Description	Flowering Season
 <p data-bbox="204 394 443 424">Narcissus 'Ipi Tombi'</p>	<p data-bbox="516 201 1094 268">Large cupped – solitary flowers, cup is one-third the length of the petals.</p>	<p data-bbox="1159 201 1203 226">Mid</p>
 <p data-bbox="164 646 483 676">Narcissus 'Barret Browning'</p>	<p data-bbox="516 453 1081 520">Small cupped – solitary flowers, the cup is less than one-third the length of the petals.</p>	<p data-bbox="1159 453 1308 478">Mid and late</p>
 <p data-bbox="204 898 443 928">Narcissus 'Petit Four'</p>	<p data-bbox="516 705 1130 772">Double – 1 or more flowers. The cup will be double. Sometimes the flower will also be double.</p>	<p data-bbox="1159 705 1308 730">Mid and late</p>
 <p data-bbox="228 1150 418 1180">Narcissus 'Stint'</p>	<p data-bbox="516 957 1081 1024">Triandrus – 2 to 6 nodding flowers with reflexed petals and short cups.</p>	<p data-bbox="1159 957 1308 982">Mid and late</p>
 <p data-bbox="188 1402 459 1432">Narcissus cyclamineus</p>	<p data-bbox="516 1209 1101 1276">Cyclamineus – solitary flowers that are angled to the stem with large trumpet and reflexed petals.</p>	<p data-bbox="1159 1209 1325 1234">Early and mid</p>
 <p data-bbox="212 1654 435 1684">Narcissus jonquilla</p>	<p data-bbox="516 1461 1114 1486">Jonquilla – 1 to 5 scented flowers with short cups.</p>	<p data-bbox="1159 1461 1308 1486">Mid and late</p>

Example	Description	Flowering Season
 <p data-bbox="199 394 451 422">Narcissus 'Geranium'</p>	<p data-bbox="516 201 1127 268">Tazetta – 10 or more very fragrant flowers per stem with small cups.</p>	<p data-bbox="1159 201 1203 228">Mid</p>
 <p data-bbox="215 646 435 674">Narcissus 'Actaea'</p>	<p data-bbox="516 457 1114 562">Poeticus – solitary fragrant flowers with spreading pure white petals and small, open, red-rimmed cups.</p>	
 <p data-bbox="188 898 459 926">Narcissus bulbocodium</p>	<p data-bbox="516 709 797 737">Wild – all wild daffodils.</p>	<p data-bbox="1159 709 1360 737">Autumn to spring</p>
 <p data-bbox="204 1150 443 1178">Narcissus 'Orangery'</p>	<p data-bbox="516 961 1089 1024">Split cupped – solitary flowers with a cup that is split one-third to half its length.</p>	<p data-bbox="1159 961 1305 989">Mid and late</p>
 <p data-bbox="212 1402 440 1430">Narcissus 'Jumblie'</p>	<p data-bbox="516 1213 1130 1276">Miscellaneous – those that do not fit into any of the other divisions.</p>	

As you can see from the above table, there is something for everyone in the narcissus family. They bloom from early to late season. They can be tiny three-inch dwarfs for your rock garden or tall stately beauties of 20 to 26 inches. The best-known color is yellow, but they also come in shades of white, cream, apricot, orange, pink and red. The leaves can be straight and flat (strap shaped) or narrow and rush like. Native to Europe and North Africa, they increase from year to year, are hardy to –30°F, do not need summer watering, need dividing infrequently, and are unappetizing to gophers and deer. Plant them in well-drained soil so that the nose of the bulb is covered to twice its height with six inches between them. The flowers tend to face the sun, so plant them accordingly. The best time to plant is September or October, right after you acquire them. Divide them in the spring after the leaves have died back. Many leaves and few flowers indicate they need to be divided.

For more information you can visit [The American Daffodil Society](#). For species and miniature narcissus visit [Nancy R. Wilson](#).

References

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The Complete Garden Flower Book. San Diego, CA: Laurel Glen Publishing

Brickell, Christopher, and Judith D. Zuk. *The American Horticultural Society A-Z Encyclopedia of Garden Plants*. New York, NY: DK Publishing