

Plant daffodils now for added spring beauty

By Melinda Myers

Daffodils have a cheery presence in the spring garden and are a surefire way to chase away the winter blues. These fall-planted bulbs are also reliable perennials that require no maintenance and are not bothered by deer or other pests. The National Garden Bureau has declared 2017 the Year of the Daffodil, and with the fall planting season upon us, now is the time to choose your favorites.

Yellow trumpet daffodils are classics, but there are many other flower styles and colors to choose from. Double-flowering types like white and yellow Lingerie and long lasting lemon-yellow Sherbourne feature multiple rows of petals and some varieties look more like peonies than daffodils.

Multi-flowering varieties like Beautiful Eyes, display several flowers on each stem. This variety's white and orange blossoms have a gardenia-like fragrance. Miniature daffodil Baby Boomer has five to ten flowers per stem. After blooming, the grassy foliage quickly fades away, allowing nearby perennials to take center stage.



Unique daffodil varieties like Lingerie offer double flowering. Photo/Longfield-Gardens.com

Split corona daffodils have an unexpected beauty and are lovely cut flowers. The cups on these daffodils are divided into segments that are pressed back against the petals. Narcissus Cassata has a ruffled yellow split cup and white petals. Lemon Beauty's shorter split cup is adorned with a yellow star.

These are just a few of the many choices that are available for gardens, containers and spring bouquets. Most daffodils are hardy in growing zones 3 to 8. In warmer zones, look for heat tolerant varieties such as Thalia and Silver Smiles.

Mix daffodils into shady gardens filled with hostas, ferns and other shade-loving perennials. As the daffodil blooms fade, the perennials will grow, mask the foliage and provide beauty throughout the remainder of the season.

Plant daffodils on a hillside, woodland border, beside a pond or under trees and shrubs. Over time, the bulbs will grow and multiply with minimal care from you. Choose cultivars with different flower styles and bloom times, and plant in drifts to create an attractive display.

Can't decide? Consider one of the many pre-mixed packages such

as Longfield Garden's Fragrant, Double, Miniature or Multi-flowering daffodil collections. Or, create your own long-lasting display by combining early, mid and late blooming varieties.

Get your daffodils off to a great start with proper planting. Order the bulbs early for best selection, and plant them in mid to late fall, any time before the ground freezes. Dig a hole and position the bulbs 6-inches deep with the pointy side up. Cover with soil, apply a low nitrogen slow release fertilizer and water thoroughly. Once in the ground, the bulbs can remain in place for years to come.

Reserve a few daffodil bulbs for your containers and window boxes. Pot them up in the fall and make sure they get at least 15 weeks of chilling at 40-45 degrees. In mild climates, the containers can be left outdoors. In zones 6 and colder, they should be stored in an unheated garage where they will be cold, but won't freeze.

Start now and enjoy a brighter beginning to next year's garden season. The daffodils you plant this fall will delight you year after year as their carefree blooms announce winter's end and spring's return.

*Melinda Myers has written numerous books, including *Small Space Gardening*. She hosts the Great Courses "How to Grow Anything" DVD series and is a columnist and contributing editor for "Birds & Blooms" magazine.*