



Brighten up the home this winter with *Narcissus*

Narcissus is the December birth flower and symbolizes good wishes, faithfulness and respect. It was well known in ancient civilization as both medicinal and botanical. Fortunately, in the 21st century, *Narcissus*, which is part of the Amaryllidaceae family, also can add color to your home during the long, winter months.

The exact origin of the name *Narcissus* isn't known, but often is linked to a Greek word for intoxicated and a youth of the same name who fell in love with his own reflection.

Typically, *Narcissus*, also known as daffodils or jonquil, are white or yellow, with either uniform or contrasting colored tepals and corona. They're easy to grow and require little maintenance, but even with minimum care, the plants should be vigorous and floriferous and multiply quickly.

The most common *Narcissus* species growing in America today were brought over from Europe by the early colonists and made their way westward with settlers from the east. Depending on the species, flowers are available from November to April.

Narcissus can grow almost anywhere and make great indoor plants that provide color and interest during the winter months. When growing them indoors, be sure the pots have drain holes. The bulbs can rot if left sitting in saturated soil. Also, don't let the container run dry after root growth has begun as the roots will die if they are allowed to dry out. Place the container in a cool, dark place for about three weeks in order to get good root growth. Once good root growth is established, move it into an area with brighter light so the tops can grow. Turn the container daily so that the leaves do not have to stretch towards the light.

When the paper whites start to bloom, move them to an area with filtered light so the blooms will last longer. This whole process takes about six weeks. Potting up a succession of bulbs every two weeks will ensure blooms throughout the winter months. Nothing is quite as nice as new blooms during the winter. This will help get you excited to start planning your spring garden.

Narcissi also are popular as cut flowers and as ornamentals. Their long history of breeding has resulted in thousands of different cultivars. Like other members of their family, narcissi produce a number of different alkaloids, which provide some protection for the plant. However, the alkaloids may be poisonous if accidentally ingested, so be careful if you have young children or pets in the home.

