



## Year Round with Your Daffodils Annual Calendar of Care

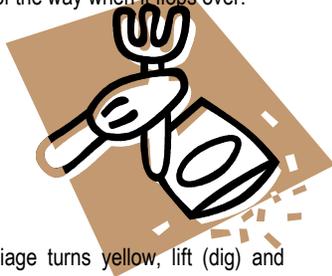
### APRIL

**Late Bloomers:** The late blooming varieties are winding down. Many prefer light afternoon shade to cope with the late heat waves, as their foliage will hold well into May. Many are white, and are quite elegant; consider some for you next bulb order to lengthen you daffodil season.

**Fertilizer:** Fertilize show flowers and modern hybrids soon after blooming (not before). This will help development of next year's bloom. Fertilize before the foliage matures and while leaves are green.

**DO NOT FERTILIZE early-date hybridized historic or species daffodils.**

**Foliage Care:** DO NOT BRAID OR CUT the foliage until at least 6 WEEKS after they have finished blooming. Doing so stunts the bulbs – the leaves do not get sufficient sunlight to store energy for next year's growth and bloom. Just push the foliage out of the way when it flops over.



### MAY

**Dig:** As soon as the foliage turns yellow, lift (dig) and divide the bulbs. Once the foliage has started to die down is the best time to dig – the bulbs are going dormant but you can use the remaining foliage as a digging guide (so you don't damage the bulbs). Fully dry off the bulbs (do not leave in the sun) and store over the summer in a cool spot with good air circulation; mesh vegetable/fruit bags work well. Never use plastic bags.

**Catalogs:** Specialty growers usually have theirs out by this month. Orders are filled first come, first serve; some require orders to be received by June.

### JUNE

**Dig:** Finish lifting bulbs. Check stored bulbs for white spots or softness – bulb rot. If signs appear, dispose of rotting bulbs before it spreads, and improve storage conditions (particularly air circulation).

**Dormant Bulbs:** Bulbs in the ground benefit from ground cover or mulch which keeps them cooler and absorbs water and nitrogen, both detrimental to bulbs (summer irrigation can quickly lead to summer bulb rot). Let the grass grow higher over naturalized plantings. Chopped leaves, oat straw or pine straw are good mulch for moderating temperatures and keeping weeds down. Smaller daffodils have a hard time coming up through pine bark. Consider over-planting with drought-tolerant annuals such as zinnias, periwinkles or marigolds. They don't require extra water, absorb rain water and nitrogen, and keep soil temperatures moderated.

### JULY

**Renovate/New Beds:** Making or improving beds is not the happiest summer occupation but it fits the daffodil growth cycle. Double dig your chosen planting spot. If drainage is less than good (daffodil bulbs rot in poorly drained soil), add coarse river sand or perlite to lighten the clay. Daffodil roots can reach a foot below the bulb, so need well spaded soil. Do not add fresh compost, mushroom compost, etc. – the high nitrogen content is a notorious cause of bulb rot.

### AUGUST

**Summer Dormancy:** Take care not to water dormant daffodil bulbs when watering other garden plants. General catalog bulb retailers will accept orders until late summer.

For specialty daffodil and general bulb companies, visit the American Daffodil Society web site:

[www.daffodilusa.org](http://www.daffodilusa.org)

## The Georgia Daffodil Society



## Annual calendar of care for Daffodils in Georgia

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## Year Round with Your Daffodils Annual Calendar of Care

The year for daffodils starts in the fall after their summer respite. Newly purchased bulbs should be planted, existing bulbs start sprouting roots. Miniatures with their small bulbs have their own special requirements; see the article on growing miniatures in north Georgia. Species, species hybrids and most daffodils hybridized before 1900 are much happier with being left alone, and tolerate only judicious, light fertilizing.

### SEPTEMBER

**Plant:** Wait for the summer heat to break and the soil to cool and rains to soften and cool the ground. Many daffodil growers wait to plant in November or December for very cold weather.

**Soil Preparation:** Some gardeners recommend bone meal, but most bone meal is processed as to render the nutrients unavailable. Also, dogs and other animals can be attracted to the scent and dig up the bulbs. Make sure the area is free of tree roots – trees are aggressive competitors for water and nutrients.

**Location:** Choose a spot receiving at least six hours of full sun daily, from late winter through mid-spring. Light shade in late spring is beneficial for many late season bloomers – the shade helps the flowers retain their color. Insufficient sunlight will diminish blooming dramatically.

### OCTOBER

**Protection:** Although arctic winters are very rare in north Georgia, be prepared just in case. Newly planted bulbs that have not had time to sprout roots can be vulnerable to freezing even if their bases are the recommended 6" to 8" deep for large bulbs (and 4" deep for small bulbs). Mulch new bulbs well.

### NOVEMBER

**Forcing:** Some daffodils can be forced to bloom early. They can be potted, refrigerated then brought into a cool sunless area to bud up. Some can be forced in water on pebbles, with the water just to, but not beyond, the bottom basal plate of the bulb (if the bulbs sit in water they will rot). Bulb companies often provide forcing instructions and recommend specific cultivars for forcing.

### DECEMBER

**Foliage Watch:** Anxious gardeners watch for emerging foliage. Make sure they can break ground unimpeded, such as tree branches fallen from storms or dead foliage from perennials that you haven't cleaned away yet. Some daffodil gardeners with fire places will sprinkle wood ashes; the bulbs love the potash (it moves quickly through the soil) and the trace elements.

### JANUARY

**Inspection:** If we are having warm weather, some varieties may already be poking up. Identify them so you can be ready to mulch them if sub-zero temperatures are predicted.

**Clean-Up:** Now is the time to mow over planting spots of daffodils naturalized in grass. Once growth is above ground, it will be hard to make the areas look neat. Weed flower beds now while weeds are small.

**Fertilize:** Spread a low nitrogen fertilizer (5-10-15, 6-6-6) over area following the guidance on bag. Don't over do it. Some daffodilians fertilizer earlier in the fall (around November).

**Caution:** If you grow species and species hybrid daffodils, fertilize only once every other year, and lightly at that. They are adapted to neglect.

### FEBRUARY

**Blooms:** Some yellow trumpets are very early, offering that first splash of color saying "Can Spring be far behind?" (One, 'Rijnveld's Early Sensation' also called "January" can bloom as early as early January in warmer areas). Resolve to include a few "very early" varieties when you place your next summer order.



### MARCH

**Blooms:** This is peak bloom season in northern Georgia. Check your daffodils for any signs of disease (twisted foliage, brown spots or yellow streaks on foliage, splochy off-color areas on blooms). Rogue and destroy immediately (do not compost). Continue inspection into April to control any outbreak of diseases.

**Identify:** Check and renew your labels if you keep track of your varieties by name. Compare the blooms with the catalog descriptions – are they true to what you thought you purchased? Most reputable suppliers will replace such "not true to description" bulbs next fall.

**Show:** Mid-March is show time for the GDS, usually at the Atlanta Botanical Gardens. Meet other daffodil growers, see what other gardeners grow, and make your "wish list" for your next bulb order.

**Plan Ahead:** Flag clumps that need lifting (digging) and dividing at the end of the season. Mark at least two sides of the clump to be on the safe side.