

# Growing Daffodils in Containers

Notes compiled by Molly Hampton from various American Daffodil Society Growers  
And from the 2024 ADS Fall Forum Presentation

Since these bulbs are not being “forced,” they will bloom at their normal bloom time.

Different people use various methods to grow daffodils in containers.

**Why grow daffodils in containers?**

- Limited garden space
- Flexibility – You can move them wherever you want over the winter. In the spring, you can place them on your patio, steps, porch, or wherever you want to cause the biggest sensation.
- Planting bulbs in pots is very easy—especially for those of us who have a hard time bending at the hip or knee.
- Enter them in daffodil shows. Plant 10 to 15 weeks before the daffodil show. Plant only one cultivar per pot if pots will be entered in a competitive daffodil show.

## What is needed in addition to bulbs

**All daffodil bulbs are candidates to plant.**

**Containers**--plastic or clay, with drainage holes; choose size and depth of container you want depending upon the number of layers of bulbs.

Optional: Inside the bottom of the pot, put a piece of netting (like from net fruit bags) or a coffee filter to somewhat reduce soil from coming out of the holes. This may make cleaning up easier if and when you move pots. Coffee filters will hold water longer, so make sure the soil does not stay too wet.

**Potting medium (soil)--your choice**

- Regular bagged potting soil
- Coarse compost bark media
- Miracle-Gro Potting Mix (blue bag)
- Potting mix formula: 33% chipped pine bark nuggets chipped smaller to 1/8 to 3/8 inch in size + 37% expanded shale + 13% perlite + 12% peat moss + 7% sand

**Labels to write the cultivar name;** label with a pencil.

## How to plant

**Fill bulb container with 3 inches of soil.** Place bulbs pointed ends up and possibly close together—the more bulbs utilized, the greater the impact in the spring. Place some soil on top of the bulbs to the top of container; keep in mind soil above the bulb does not impact its growth.

### After planting bulbs in containers:

- *All the following suggestions may vary in their implementation, depending upon the seasonal weather and where the pots are placed—either on a patio or inside a building, or sunk in the ground.*
- Water the pot 2-3 times until the soil is thoroughly damp. Watering may take extra air out of the soil, so add soil if needed.
- During the winter chilling phase, the bulbs are growing roots; so it is important that the potting mix not dry out. However, be careful not to overwater; excess moisture can cause the bulb to rot. Make sure the pot drains well and is not placed in an area that is susceptible to standing water. During the months the roots are growing, the soil should generally remain slightly damp but certainly not soggy.
- Water lightly once a week if soil is dry because of no rain or if the pot is inside a building. Depending upon the amount of rain, water lightly as needed, perhaps only once a month, for example.
- When foliage is a few inches tall, water more frequently, perhaps twice a week.
- As foliage continues to grow, watering every other day may be necessary. Growing foliage needs more water than was necessary when the roots are developing. As the buds are developing and open as flowers, significant water may be appropriate as long as the soil drains well.

### Placing container for overwintering and for temperature control during growing period:

- Roots grow in damp soil in the dark during the cold-weather months, just as the roots grow on bulbs planted several inches below ground in a garden.
- After the roots develop, foliage erupts above the soil level from the bulb.
- Containers may be placed on a porch, patio, garage, on or under a deck, or in any unheated building.
- If freezing weather occurs, move the container inside to a warm garage, basement, or just inside your back door.
- When danger of a hard freeze (below 25 degrees) is over, place the pot back outside because cold weather is essential for the flowers to bloom.
- When the foliage appears above the soil level, the pot needs to be placed in a sunny area; light is essential for the foliage to grow and the flower to bloom.
- If the winter is longer than usual and you are ready for flowers, you may want to place the container on a seed-starting electric heat mat or place the pot under a “grow light.”
- You may want to slow down growth by putting the pot in the shade or in the garage.
- Containers may also be sunk in the ground during the entire season, probably covered in mulch or leaves for insulation and preferably on the north side of the house—so that they do not get too warm from the winter sun.

If you have squirrels, place a peony screen/grate over the container to keep them out. You can also put used coffee grounds on the top of the soil to discourage them.

When entering a container in a daffodil show, stakes are allowed for tall foliage if unobtrusive.

After blooming, let foliage die down. Plant bulbs in the ground or turn container on its side to let bulbs dry over the summer, and replant next fall in the container.