



Winter Sweetness : Paperwhite Narcissus

Paperwhite Narcissus are easy bulbs to force indoors and will bloom within 3 - 4 weeks after planting. Choose a bright, cool place for your Paperwhites out of direct sun and away from heating vents.

Potting Up Your Paperwhites

- There are two ways to plant Paperwhite bulbs - using either potting soil or gravel.
- For both methods, choose a container that is at least 3" deep.
- For the prettiest display, use enough bulbs to fill the pot completely.
- **Soil Planting:** Choose a container with drainage holes. Place the Paperwhite bulbs, pointy-side up on top of 1"-2" of good-quality potting soil such as *Espoma Organic Potting Mix*. Cover the bulbs completely and firm the soil around the bulbs. Water thoroughly. Vigorous roots will push the bulbs up through the soil, so it is important to plant them deeply.
- **Gravel Planting:** choose a water-tight container. Fill it with a few inches of gravel, sea glass, marbles or similar loose medium. Press the Paperwhite bulbs into the gravel, making sure that their tips are pointed directly upwards. If the tips are curved over a little don't worry, they will straighten upwards when given some light.

Care of Your Paperwhites

- Maintaining adequate water for Paperwhites is important but depends on your potting method.
- **Soil Planting:** Keep soil evenly moist. Continue watering until plants are done blooming.
- **Gravel Planting:** Keep water level to just below the bottom of the bulb. Do not allow the water to be in contact with the base of the bulb, or the bulb could rot. Make sure, however, that the roots themselves are covered by water.
- To promote upright growth, rotate containers to avoid the Paperwhites leaning to their light source. Staking may be necessary - use a stake or twiggy branch and a pretty ribbon around the foliage to add color as well as support!
- Cornell University researchers have discovered that using a 5% solution of alcohol will result in less floppy plants that are one-third to one-half as high but with no change to the flower size, scent, or endurance. Use the gravel planting method with regular water until the shoot is about 1"-2" high, then pour off the water and replace with either water and 40% distilled spirit (gin, vodka, whiskey, etc.) in a 7 to 1 solution or water and 70% rubbing alcohol in a 11 to 1 solution. This will dilute your alcohol to 5% so your Paperwhites won't overdose!
- Paperwhite flowers last for a very long time, but the bulbs unfortunately will not re-bloom. They are South African natives and will not perennialize here, so dispose of bulbs after blooming.
- Keep additional Paperwhite bulbs at the ready to create a succession of blooms all winter long. Keep bulbs in a paper sack in a cool, dark environment. Pot them up at intervals of three weeks to have overlapping weeks of lovely flowers.