

PAPERWHITES ZIVA

In Greek mythology Narcissus was the youth who fell in love with his own reflection in a pool and was turned into a lily by the gods. The genus is in the Amaryllis family and includes about 50 species of bulbous perennials. Paperwhites are classified botanically as "Narcissus tazetta ssp papyraceus" or the lily with small papery cups. They originate from the Mediterranean, especially Spain and Italy, and were introduced from the 1200's from Europe. In the wild, paperwhites emerge in the fall, producing both flowers and leaves during the winter. Their growth is coincidental with the Mediterranean rainy cool season. After flowering they grow vegetatively to store up reserves for the next bloom cycle, and go dormant during the late spring, early summer. We can thank the Dutch for turning things all around.

These days paperwhites are principally grown in Israel. They are harvested in June/July and after they have been treated against diseases, insects etc. they are being shipped in temperature controlled containers to the USA.

They are propagated like other Narcissus varieties. After harvesting, the bulbs are graded by size. The larger size bulbs (primarily 13 cm and up) are packed for the consumer and/or the commercial grower market. The smaller sizes are being replanted for further growth.

Bulbs are graded in centimeters and indicate the circumference of the bulbs. The smallest size available is 13/14 cm and the largest size is 17/18 cm. The larger the bulb the more flower stems and the more "florets" on top of each flower stem it will produce. The size we are using today is 15/16cm. (average size bulbs)

Planting and care instructions:

Paperwhites can be grown either in soil or water. Today we will discuss growing paperwhites in water. Place approximately one inch of pebbles in the bowl provided. Set the bulbs on top of the pebbles and add another layer of pebbles all around the bulbs and some over the bulbs. Once the bulbs are rooting, the bulbs have a tendency to push themselves upwards. By putting fairly heavy pebbles over part of the exposed bulbs the bulbs will stay in place. Fill the bowl with regular tap water so the bottom of the bulbs is just touching the water (a too high water level will result in bulb rot). Keep the water at this level at all times. No need to add fertilizer. Root and foliage growth will develop in about 5-7 days and the bulbs will start blooming in about 3-4 weeks. This is not perfect science and living things always have their own time table. Always make sure the bulbs are exposed to plenty of daylight. In a dark environment the bulbs have a tendency to grow tall and spindly. The leaves have a tendency to grow towards the

light source and as a result they will tilt in that direction. In extreme circumstances this will cause the plants to fall over. In order to avoid this, turn the planter 180 degrees twice a week. Keep the room temperature at about 68 F and you will be rewarded with clusters of fragrant flowers in a short time.

You can also cut the flowers and place them in a vase.

Some varieties have a fragrance but you can get bulb varieties without fragrance nowadays.

When you plant bulbs in soil, half cover the bulbs and press them into the soil firmly. You can add moss to the top, to make it look more attractive and place several pots in a tray covered with moss. The possibilities are endless. I have used cranberries on top of the pebbles to give it a festive look. Glass pebbles can be used also.

After the bulbs have finished blooming, the bulbs will have to be discarded as the "forcing" of these bulbs has taken all the reserve food out of the bulbs and they will not bloom again. It is too cold in this area to plant these bulbs outside as they will freeze.

Enjoy!!!!

POTTING THE BULBS: Amaryllis shipped in bags require potting. Pot bulbs individually in 6–7" pots or group 3 bulbs together in a 10–12" container. Begin by placing a well-drained potting mix in a plastic tub. Slowly add warm water and stir with your hand until the mix is moist but not soggy. Then fill the pot about half full with potting mix, set the bulb on top of the mix and fill in around the bulb with additional mix. Adjust the position of the bulb as needed, so that the top third of the bulb is exposed. The final level of the mix should be about 1/2" below the rim of the pot to allow for watering. Firm the mix and water lightly to settle it around the bulbs. Then follow the "Pre-bloom Care" instructions below.

Please note: Some of our Amaryllis kits are shipped with a disk of potting medium (Cocopeat). Follow the directions on the package for rehydrating the disk. Fill the pot about 1/2 full with Cocopeat, set the bulb on top, and fill in around the bulb with additional Cocopeat. Adjust the position of the bulb as needed, so that the top 1/3 of the bulb is exposed. Do not be concerned if the final level of the Cocopeat is down inside the pot. Firm the Cocopeat and water lightly to settle it around the bulb. Then follow the "Pre-bloom Care" instructions below

PRE-POTTED BULBS: Amaryllis sent already potted need only a thorough watering with lukewarm water to begin growing. Then follow the "Pre-bloom Care" instructions below.

Please note: Pre-potted Amaryllis are shipped with a layer of decorative Spanish moss on top of each pot. Cut the rubber band that holds the Spanish moss in place and arrange the moss around the bulb so it looks attractive.

PRE-BLOOM CARE OF AMARYLLIS: Place the pot where the temperature remains above 60°F. The warmer the temperature (70–80°F night and day is ideal), the faster the bulb will sprout and grow. Providing bottom heat (by setting the pot on a propagation mat or on the top of a refrigerator) may help stimulate growth. Water only when the top inch of the potting mix is dry to the touch. Watering more frequently, particularly just after potting, can cause the bulb to rot. (If the pot is covered with Spanish Moss, lift the moss and pour water directly on the potting mix.)

Growth generally begins in 2–8 weeks. Certain varieties of Amaryllis may take more time to sprout. As long as your bulb remains firm, be patient and take care not to overwater. Provide ample sunshine (a south-facing window or a sunroom) as soon as the bulb sprouts. Rotate the pot frequently to prevent the flower stalks from leaning toward the light. The flower stalks may require support to keep from toppling. [Click here](#) for our Amaryllis stakes that are ideally suited to this purpose.

