

# NARCISSUS for FORCING

## Paperwhites and Other Varieties

**TAZETTA NARCISSUS** have been cultivated for centuries, particularly in the Mediterranean region. There are many varieties, including *Soliel d'Or*; *Chinese Sacred Lily*; *Angels in the Water*; and *Paperwhites* (*Ziva*, *Omri*, *Galilea* and *Erlicheer*). All of these can be brought to bloom in a container of rocks, pebbles or gravel, and water. They are occasionally called “bunching” narcissus.

***Soliel d'Or*** or ***Grand Soliel d'Or*** produces a bouquet of deliciously fragrant blossoms on each 10 to 18-inch high stem. This fragrance does not become “bitter” as the blooms age. Petals are deep yellow and the small, short cups (trumpets) range from yellow orange to sulphur yellow. Count on 8 to 12 weeks from planting to bloom.

***Chinese Sacred Lily*** offers cream-colored petals surrounding pale canary yellow cups. These are borne in groups of up to 12 on stems 10 to 18 inches tall. Blooms have an intense sweet fragrance that doesn't “turn” as they fade. Bloom time varies from 8 to 12 weeks.

***Angels in the Water*** are very large bulbs which enjoy the same multiple blooms, sweet scent, coloring and growing conditions as their smaller cousins, *Chinese Sacred Lilies*. In China (the exporter of these bulbs), fine-tipped knives are used to pare off the brown tunic (covering) of the bulbs before they are planted in water. The white bulbs and pale reflection when they bloom are the “*Angels in the Water*.” These “angels” take 8 to 12 weeks to bloom and generally grow 10 to 20 inches tall.

***Paperwhites*** is a general term that can include *Galilea* (cream); *Ziva* (white); *Omri* (cream with a yellow cup) or *Erlicheer* (cream-colored double). All of these varieties have strong fragrance, grow 10 to 18 inches tall and bloom about 4 to 6 weeks after planting.

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## The Recipe

You will need:

- a container without drainage
- a small amount of horticultural charcoal
- bulbs
- rocks, pebbles , gravel or colored glass

Bulbs do not need to be pre-chilled and the charcoal keeps the water sweet. Do not use beach rocks because of possible salt contamination of the water.

1. Place a small amount of charcoal in the base of your container.
2. Add a small amount of pebbles and nestle the bulbs into these.
3. Add pebbles until they reach the “shoulder” (top 1/3) of the bulbs.
4. Fill container with tap water to the base of the bulb. Refill when necessary.

- If you use large rocks or flat pebbles, just “float” them around the bulbs.
- Bulbs grow best when given 2 to 3 weeks in the dark to encourage root growth. After this time, bring into the light and, when bloom stems are at least 4 inches high, give bright light.
- Keep bulbs at temperatures of 45° to 65°F. Higher temperatures may inhibit blooming.
- The second time water is to be added, include one teaspoon to one tablespoon (depending on container size) of gin or vodka. This (somewhat unscientific) step can help keep foliage from stretching and becoming floppy — as can cool temperatures and bright light.
- Enjoy the scent and beautiful blooms of these narcissus but do not expect them to bloom next year. When the flowers are finished, dispose of the bulbs and save the pebbles for another time.