



# Daffodils

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Is a daffodil the same as a jonquil? It is if you live in the South. That's the name southerners give to anything that grows in spring and has a trumpet of some sort. Others call that same type of flower a narcissus, no matter that it really is.

Wait a minute! What do I mean, "No matter what it really is"?

The truth is that not all jonquils are daffodils, although all narcissuses are. Jonquils are not narcissus and vice versa. A jonquil is just one of the 13 different classifications of the species we call daffodils that allow us to understand something about what that particular type of daffodil really is. Narcissus is the proper name of the entire group of plants (the genus) that we familiarly call daffodils. SO all narcissuses are daffodils and all daffodils are narcissus. They are the same – with narcissus being the proper name and daffodil the familiar nickname. The different classifications of daffodils refer to the various species that belong to that group.

One thing to remember when trying to figure out what a particular daffodil species looks like is that all daffs have two main parts to their flower – a perianth (which refers to the petals that surround the center) and a corona, which refers to the center portion of the flower. Usually we think of the corona as a trumpet, but daffodils do have many other intriguing center formations, which cause them to belong to one particular classification or another.

Jonquils - For instance, a jonquil is actually a narcissus that is part of the classification "jonquilla" which refers to the very thin, rush-like foliage of this type of daff. True jonquils usually have more than one blossom to a stem, and are more often than not, fragrant. They also tend to be somewhat small. Bell Song' is a particularly lovely jonquil with about three blooms per stem, ivory petals and a soft pink cup. So you can see – it is quite different from the large single flowered yellow flower with a big trumpet that is the picture that first springs to mind when we say "daffodil." But take a look at our fragrant Jonquil Mix to see how many other colors and forms a jonquil can have. The main reason a daffodil falls into the jonquilla class is because of the leaf form; some have true trumpets while others can be somewhat flattened.

Trumpet daffodils - When we first hear the name "daffodil" this is probably the image that springs to mind. This type of narcissus inevitably has a large trumpet shaped corona that is fairly long and prominent. In fact the cup is equal to or longer than the length of the petals. Take a look at our Daffodils for Naturalizing and you'll see what I mean.

Long Cup Daffodils - Long cup daffodils have a corona similar to that of a trumpet daff, except that it is somewhat shorter – more than a third of the length of the petals or perianth segments, but less than equal to that length. 'Dottie's Dream' is a good example of a long cup daffodil.

Short Cup Daffodils - Guess what? This type of bloom has a very short trumpet – less than one third the length of the petals. This type also has only one flower to a stem. The petals and cups can be any variety and combination of colors, so the only real distinguishing characteristic is that very short cup that isn't really a trumpet at all. A good example for you to see is 'Kissproof'.

Double Daffodils - A double daffodil scarcely resembles what we ordinarily think of flowers in this genus look like. There is no trace of a trumpet, but instead several layers of petals atop the perianth. There can be multiple flowers to a stem – or some bear only one blossom. They come in

an amazing variety of colors – and no one double looks exactly like any other variety. Compare ‘Replete’ with ‘White Lion’ to see what I mean or try one of my all-time favorites, the gardenia daffodil, which is also beautifully fragrant.

One interesting thing about this classification is the colors – anything from pure white to white with orange or pink, or even a combination like yellow and orange – and the coloring usually gets more intense as the weather gets colder. (So there is something good about those temperature drops!)

Triandrus Daffodils - Triandrus daffodils often look like they are somewhat sorrowful, as their little heads tend to droop. They usually have more than one flower per stem. Often the petals are reflexed, which means that they sweep backward as opposed to the faintly forward curve of the perianth in most daffodil classifications. You can also recognize a Triandrus because of the silky texture of those petals.

Although it doesn’t show up too well in the photo, you can see some of the petals of ‘Tete-aTete’ are reflexed – almost as if a strong wind were sweeping them away from the corona. Or look at the flowers on the bottom left of our White Daffodil Mix to see some Triandrus with strongly reflexed petals.

Cyclamineus Daffodils - These flowers are so named because of a vague resemblance to the cyclamen. The perianths of these flowers are very, very reflexed, so that they almost appear to be heading in the wrong direction. There is usually one bloom per stem, while the trumpet is not only very straight (heading in the opposite direction from the petals) but also quite narrow.

Tazetta Daffodils - The flowers that we usually find when looking for “paperwhite narcissus” are usually tazetta daffodils. Often these are less hardy than most, which is why here in the north tend to use them for indoor forcing – they wouldn’t stand up to our northern winters. They usually bear from three to twenty flowers to a stout stem and have very short cups and rounded somewhat crinkled petals. ‘Ehrlicheer’ is an unusual Tazetta because it is also a double.

Poeticus Daffodils - There really is something poetic about this group. They have white petals, sometimes slightly reflexed, and a flat but brilliantly colored small cup of a vibrant color that sometimes seems to leak into the base of the petals. That cup is usually edged with red, making the blooms unusually vibrant. As a bonus, the Poets daffodil is fragrant. Blooms – one to a stem – tend to be small – but the impact of their color more than compensates for that.

Bulbocodium Hybrids - At first glance, a Bulbocodium daffodil may look like one of nature’s mistakes. The cup is extremely long and exaggerated, and tends to billow out from the petals like a hoop skirt sitting on its side. By contrast, the petals are unusually small. The flowers are fairly small too – but they make up for that by producing as many as 15 flowers per stem. ‘Golden Bells’ is a relatively new hybrid of this variety – and one that tolerates even warm climates surprisingly well.

Split Corona Daffodils - With this type of flower, you don’t have a true cup. In fact, it is as though someone came through with a razor and slit the cup into segments and then flattened them back toward the perianth.

There are two forms of split cup daffodils. One has a rather full corona with the corona segments opposite the perianth segments; the corona segments usually in two whorls of three. These can be difficult to distinguish from a double daffodil but they are not nearly as full and puffy. The American Daffodil Society (ADS) has a good photo of a split cup daffodil at their home site, in fact you can see examples of daffodils from every separate division on this page.

The second form is the butterfly or papillon form. These are even more difficult to distinguish from a double, because the corona segments alternate to the perianth segments; the corona segments usually in a single whorl of six. But the coronas of both are longer than those of a double, and tend to lie flat against the perianth instead of being raised away from it. A beautiful example of the papillon form is ‘Palmares’ which almost looks more like a daylily than a daffodil – with the bonus that you can enjoy it in spring and don’t need to deadhead it daily to keep it looking its loveliest. These plants have thick, strong stems that stand up to inclement weather – which is good



because they are early bloomers, often arriving before the snows have ceased.

If you run across a daffodil that doesn't seem to fit into any category I have described so far, don't think that you are hopelessly confused. Even the experts at the ADS can't find a classification for many of the new hybrids that come out yearly. So they actually have a classification that is called "miscellaneous." So if you are confused by a particular new variety you're probably not alone.

Species Daffodils - Finally we come to a very special class of daffodils – the ones that are parents to all the classifications we looked at above. These are the species daffodils, created by Mother Nature before the birds, bees and hybridizers started to breed and cross breed them to create new forms. They can be found in the wild, and also in the garden. For instance, while there is an entire classification of Poeticus daffodils, they all sprang from one species of narcissus – the original Poeticus – which happens to be the one we carry in our catalog. You might call these the old and unimproved versions of the daffodils we commonly grow – although most are very beautiful in their own right. It's just that breeders can't help themselves – they just love to cross one plant with another to see what new results they get once their cross produces seed and the seed produces flowers.

There is also a species *Bulbocodium* – the original from which our 'Golden Bells' was bred. It is a bit paler than 'Golden Bells' and somewhat less hardy – which is why daffodil breeders went to work on it – to provide a new and improved version.

So, as you see – a daffodil is really a narcissus and a jonquil is really a daffodil (and really a narcissus) but that is only the beginning of the story. There is a lot more to learn and the ADS system gets much more complicated than what I have explained here. Because of all the hybridizing, which has given us interesting varieties that weren't available in the wild (such as all the lovely new daffodils with pink coloring) they have a system that divides daffodils not only into the 13 classes described here, but also by the color mix – whether a trumpet is yellow in both perianth and corona, or is one color in corona and another in perianth - and according to where each color appears.

But we needn't get that technical here. It's enough to simply plant and grow the forms we love most – and to understand the difference between a daffodil and a narcissus – because that's one question that someone will eventually and inevitably ask you. It happens to all of us daffodil lovers.



"Pink Daffodils" - The "pink" daffodil certainly needs some explanation.

It can be compared to the "black" tulip which is not really black but very dark lavender - just because the consumer wishes for the "pink" daffodil, the "black" tulip, the "blue" hosta and the "red" crocus, the descriptions tend to be stretched a little and when a daffodil color is different from the yellow cup, the hybridizers are quick to pronounce it a PINK daffodil – it is just something that nature has a difficult time to produce, therefore you will only see a white daffodil with a "pink" cup and never an all pink daffodil.

Usually all daffodils with a pink shade cup will start out with creamy perianths turning into white and a cup that will start out yellow and as it ripens will be a shade of pink. Now the pink color of the cup has to be looked at within the context of the daffodil flowers and certainly cannot be compared to the pink ribbon tied around a bunch of flowers on Mother's Day.

The "pink" in many pink daffodil varieties is a creamy-pink color usually at the best of its color the last couple of days that the daffodil flowers are in full bloom.