

Bulbs for Spring Gardens #2 (Daffodils & Tulips)

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The common yellow daffodil (narcissus) includes 50-70 species, some fragrant and others without scent. Either solitary or borne in an umbel, the flowers are white, varying shades of yellow and sometimes bi-colored. Height ranges from several inches to two feet. Blooming varies from early, mid to late season.

Daffodils prefer full sun but most will tolerate half shade. They need moisture while growing and during dry summers. When bloom is finished, you may cut the actual flower head off. One source says not to cut leaves until they are completely dead. Another, wait six weeks or so and then remove all foliage. Braiding or bundling leaves is not necessary. The leaves manufacture food for the bulb and next year's bloom.

In my garden I've planted in areas shaded all summer but in the early spring the deciduous trees have not leafed out so the daffodils do fine. Best of all, deer seem to stay clear of daffodils. Start by trying a few varieties, and you'll get hooked and want to add more. Grouping a number together or planting a large drift can create two different effects. The more the better!

Tulips are another large group of bulbs with about 100 species and many thousands of cultivars. Their color range and size (height) is larger, and blooms are usually solitary. A few have two or three flowers on short branches. The flowers are mostly erect, blooming from early spring to early summer. They need:

- well drained soil
- full sun, tolerating some light shade
- moisture but not waterlogged.

Tulips make excellent cut flowers planted in beds, borders, containers and rock gardens. I have had great success packing three gallon and larger plastic pots with bulbs and cut them for using in arrangements. I can also locate these pots away from deer.

After you try a few tulip varieties seek out species tulips, the wild form from which the hybrid tulips were bred. Species are generally much smaller and less vulnerable to spring rain and wind. My experience has been that the deer ignore these original wild tulips – BUT, no guarantees!