

## Tale from the Garden!

### Pots of Potential!

We're often put off growing plants because we haven't the room. Trees & shrubs in particular seem too threatening to introduce to a small garden. But if grown in containers, their growth is not only curtailed by a limited root run, but they can be moved to the fore when they are enjoying their main season of interest, then shifted into the background once their display fades. They have the ability to give the garden a different look at different times of the year. This is very true of plants at their best during the winter – beauties such as witch hazel & winter-flowering honeysuckle.

I'm a great fan of plants in containers – with one proviso: the containers should be large. A rash of small containers – some terracotta, some plastic & some ceramic – can look messy with no overall pattern. The practical aspects are more important though – small containers dry out in hot weather & are more likely to freeze in prolonged cold spells. What's more, the compost in a small pot will rapidly run out of nutrients & the plants will look miserable. Strong winds are likely to blow over small containers & even smash them, which can prove costly. Larger containers may cost more but they last longer & grow better plants. Half a dozen of them will have far more impact than a sprinkling of small ones.

You can plant them up now, using seasonal plants such as witch hazel or evergreens such as cones of yew. Other containers can be planted with seasonal displays of winter flowering heather, pansies or dwarf narcissi such as 'Tête-à-tête'.

Even now, a few well-chosen pots & tubs, along with bright residents, will perk up a small garden, help grow better plants, cut down on clutter & create some real cheer for the onlooker!



Narcissus 'Tête-à-tête' is one of the most popular dwarf daffodil varieties available right now. Standing at only 15cm high, its small size makes it ideal for planting in patio containers or at the front of the border. The deep golden yellow flowers appear in early spring, with each stem bearing up to 3 blooms, perfectly formed, gently nodding, very fragrant flowers. Daffodils have long been considered one of the heralds of spring. Daffodils are some of the first flowers we see in springtime and are a great indicator that winter is over. Because of this, they are seen to represent **rebirth** and **new beginnings**.

**The daffodil also has a few other meanings that you might not be so familiar with:**

In the UK daffodils are known as '**lent lilies**' because they tend to bloom between Ash Wednesday and Easter. Narcissi flowers are also seen to represent **creativity, inspiration, awareness and inner reflection, forgiveness, and vitality**.

If you give a bunch of narcissi to a loved one it means '**they're the only one**' and is said to ensure happiness. Some believe that the name narcissus is derived from the Greek word '**narkao**' which means 'to be numb' due to daffodil bulbs **being poisonous to animals**.

Mythological meaning:

A well-known myth surrounding the narcissus flower comes from **Greek mythology**. Narcissus was the son of the River God Cephissus and the nymph Liriope. He was an incredibly handsome young man who belittled those who loved him. In the classic version of this tale by Ovid (a Roman poet), **Narcissus** was walking in the woods when a mountain nymph called Echo saw him. Attracted by his beauty she decided to follow him. When Narcissus shouted 'who's there?' Echo responded by repeating his words back to him because that's all she could do. Eventually she decided to reveal herself and embrace him. He rejected her advances and told her to leave him alone. Heartbroken, she spent the rest of her life roaming the woods until nothing was left but the sound of her

voice (an echo). Learning of this, **Nemesis - the Goddess of Revenge** - decided to punish Narcissus by drawing him to a stream where he saw his reflection. Unable to look away from such perfection, he fell in love with it. When his love wasn't reciprocated, he couldn't bear to leave his reflection. After staring at it for a few days he grew exhausted, fell into the stream and drowned. It's said that daffodils are called narcissus because they commonly grow on the banks of streams and rivers where Narcissus perished. Some believe that the way daffodils bend their necks towards the ground symbolises Narcissus bending over to admire his image in the water, and this is why **daffodils are sometimes said to represent vanity and unrequited love**.

What does the narcissus flower symbolise?

Some cultures believe that daffodils bring wealth. In Wales it is said that those who see the first daffodil of the season invite wealth for the following 12 months. Similarly, in China, legend states that if a daffodil blooms in your garden on New Year's Day your house will have good fortune for the rest of the year.

Most cultures celebrate the narcissus as a symbol of hope and joy, which is a big leap from Medieval times when Europeans believed that if a narcissus flower drooped as you looked at it, it was an omen of death. Another common belief is that giving a single narcissi can bring misfortune - so make sure you play it safe and always send a bunch!

On a lighter note, daffodils are given to celebrate 10 years of marriage because they symbolise joy, cheerfulness and happiness. They're also used as a form of payment on the Isles of Scilly where one is sent to Prince Charles each year to cover the cost of rent for any unattended land.

The charming habit of forming two to three blooms per stem is one of the reasons why Narcissus Tête à Tête has remained so popular over the years. Add to that its vigorous growth and the fact that it easily forms dense clumps if left to itself for a few years, you're looking at a veritable explosion of flowers. A "*tête-à-tête*" is an intimate conversation, and when these lovely Narcissi are in full flower, the blooms on each stem seem to be having a chat, agreeing with each other as their heads nod in the wind.



While we're living in a world where the key to keeping this terrible virus 'contained' is to curtail its spread (hands, face, space), one of the most important things we must do is keep 'talking'. We can perk up someone's day by making a phone call, having a Whatsapp or Zoom chat, or even having a door-step conversation. It not only reduces our own feelings of isolation but will overcome the loneliness that many people are experiencing. As daffodils are the heralds of Spring, so we can take inspiration & look towards the future with hope & joy.

"After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, the one who called you into his eternal glory in Christ Jesus, will himself restore, empower, strengthen, and establish you." — 1 Peter 5:10

**The Good News:** God doesn't give us anything we cannot handle. The struggles will only make us stronger - together.