

For great daffodils, make sure to follow growing guidelines

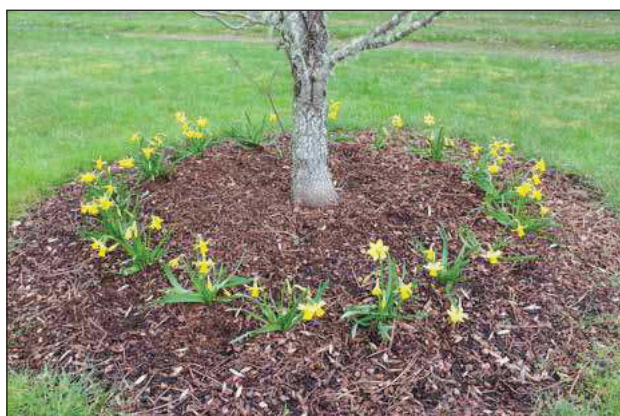
BONNIE COURTER
For The News-Review

Question: My daffodils put out leaves in the spring, but never produce any flowers. What am I doing wrong?

Answer: After a dark, dreary Oregon winter, cheery yellow daffodils are a welcome harbinger of spring. Daffodils, jonquils and narcissus are common names for plants in the genus *Narcissus*, and are one of the easiest spring bulbs to grow. They're long-lived, grow well in Oregon and return every year, multiplying over time.

There are 25 species of *Narcissus* and about 13,000 listed cultivars, so by selecting early to late-season varieties, you can have delightful daffodils flowering March through May. They come in various shapes, sizes and colors including yellow, white and even bi-colored flowers with orange or pink. The most common bloom shape is the trumpet, but you can find ruffled petticoat-shaped, short cupped, flowers that hang like bells, as well as flowers that look windswept. Some have a wonderful fragrance and others have no fragrance.

Scatter daffodils among landscape plants for bursts of color or plant in pots or along walkways for a more formal look.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF BONNIE COURTER

Daffodils are cold resistant, but a layer of mulch can offer extra protection.



If daffodils aren't blooming, it may be because the bulbs did not produce and store enough food during the previous season.

The bulbs are toxic, so rabbits, squirrels and gophers leave them alone.

The reason your daffodils are not flowering could be that they didn't have enough food storage in their bulbs the previous year to produce flowers. When the flowers fade, there's a tendency to cut off the brown, unsightly foliage too early. Daffodil foliage typically persists for four to six weeks after blooming, during which time the plant is

manufacturing crucial food reserves down to the bulbs. If foliage is cut off before it has died back naturally, this prevents the plant from storing adequate food and reduces plant vigor and bulb size, resulting in fewer or no flowers come next spring.

Some deal with the floppy, unruly foliage by braiding the leaves or tying them together with rubber bands. However, by doing this, you limit the surface area of the leaves exposed to



Daffodils do best in direct sunlight. To make sure bulbs bloom again the next year, ensure they are planted in a sunny area.

sunlight, again hindering the manufacture of food. Best to leave the foliage alone til it's turned brown, at which time it's safe to cut the leaves off at ground level and discard them.

Since daffodils thrive in full sun, those planted in shady areas may have insufficient sunlight to store enough food for the following year. If this is the case, wait til the foliage has died back, then dig them up and move them to a sunnier spot.

Another reason for weak plants is overcrowding. If this is the case, wait til the plant is spent, then lift the bulbs, separate and replant them. There's no advantage to storing these bulbs above ground til fall.

The best time to plant new daffodils is in the fall. Plant them in well-drained soil with pointed end up, at least twice as deep as bulb height and 3" apart. They're very cold tolerant, but putting

down a 2-3" layer of mulch will protect them even more.

With good care and favorable growing conditions, weak, non-blooming daffodils can be encouraged to bloom again.

Do you have a gardening question? Please e-mail, call, or visit the Douglas County Master Gardeners Plant Clinic at douglasmg@oregonstate.edu, 541-236-3052, or 1134 S.E. Douglas Ave., Roseburg.