

# ‘paper-white’ narcissus



## BOTANICAL NAME

*Narcissus tazetta* ‘Paper-white’  
(nar-SIS-us tuh-ZET-uh)

## COMMON NAMES

Polyanthus *Narcissus*,  
Paper-white *Narcissus*, Paper-whites

## DESCRIPTION

The ‘Paper-white’ variety of polyanthus *Narcissi* has multiple small trumpet-shaped white blooms clustered atop smooth, hollow stems that are typically 12 to 18 inches in length. Open blooms generally face outward, slightly upward or slightly downward and provide a strong sweet fragrance. In the center of each six-petaled bloom is a corona (cup), which gives the flowers their “trumpet” form. Inside the corona are orange-yellow stamens.

## COLOR

As the variety name suggests, ‘Paper-white’ *Narcissi* are bright white.

## DECORATIVE LIFE

The bloom cycle of these potted bulbs can span 10 days to three weeks depending on their care and interior environment (temperature and light, see “In-Store and Consumer Care”).

## AVAILABILITY

Depending on grower, potted ‘Paper-white’ *Narcissi* can be found from October through April.

## in-store and consumer care

**LIGHT** These plants require bright indirect light. Avoid exposing them to direct sun.

**WATER** Potted paper-whites need evenly moist soil. Water them thoroughly when the soil surface is dry to the touch, and allow water to drain.

**TEMPERATURE** These plants prefer low temperatures, 50 F to 65 F, which is unlikely in most indoor environments. Let customers know, however, that longevity is directly related to temperature. Paper-whites can be stored in a floral cooler at 33 F to 41 F for up to one week.

**ETHYLENE SENSITIVITY** Low; these plants are fairly resistant to the effects of ethylene gas.

**FERTILIZER** Feeding is not usually necessary because the bulbs contain essentially all of the nutrition these plants need to grow and flower.

**GROOMING** Cut off individual blooms as they fade. Leave the plants’ stems and leaves intact.

**REPOTTING / REBLOOMING** After blooming concludes, water and fertilize the bulbs weekly until the leaves turn yellow and wither. Remove the bulbs from the pot, and allow them to dry. Once the bulbs are dry, cut off dead foliage, store the bulbs in a cool place until autumn, then plant them outdoors. These bulbs will not bloom again indoors.

## purchasing tip

■ Potted *Narcissi*, like many bulb plants, are relatively short lived, so buy these plants when flower stems are eight to 10 inches tall and buds are visible but blooms have not started to open.

## toxicity alert

■ All *Narcissus* species contain crystalline alkaloids, especially in the bulbs but also in the leaves, that can be toxic to both humans and animals, if ingested, causing digestive, nervous and even cardiac disorders.

■ Some species also can cause mild to severe contact dermatitis in some people.

## challenges

**PESTS AND DISEASES** Both are fairly rare; however, spider mites can attack potted bulbs. Symptoms include unhealthy looking leaves with tiny yellow dots.

**BUD DROP** Dry conditions and a sudden change from low to high temperatures can cause plants’ buds to drop before opening. Increase water and humidity, and avoid moving the plants rapidly from cold to warm conditions; allow them to acclimate gradually from one to the other.

## TOO SMALL STEMS; TROUBLE STAYING UPRIGHT

Causes include overly warm conditions and not enough light.

## fun facts

**WHAT’S IN A NAME** *Narcissus* is a Greek name said to be derived from “narke,” meaning numbness, in reference to its narcotic properties. The species name “tazetta” derives from the Italian “tazza,” meaning small cup, in reference to the coronas of these flowers. The common name “polyanthus” means many flowers.

**FAMILY MATTERS** *N. tazetta* is a member of the *Amaryllidaceae* (amaryllis) family. In addition to daffodils and jonquils, close relatives include amaryllis (*Hippeastrum*), African lily (*Agapanthus*), Eucharist lily (*Eucharis*), Guernsey lily (*Nerine*) and kaffir lily (*Clivia*).

**HOME SWEET HOME** ‘Paper-white’ *Narcissi* are native to the western Mediterranean region east to Iran. **sf**

