

HOME FORCING OF POTTED PAPERWHITE *NARCISSUS*

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**Part 1—General Aspects**

“Paperwhite” *Narcissus* is one of the easiest flower bulbs for home-owners to force. Commercially, several types are available. Some cultivars (varieties) have pure white flowers while others have white perianths with light yellow cups. Paperwhites originate in the Mediterranean and are tender bulbs. Thus, they can be grown outside only in Climatic Zones 8 to 11. Unless one lives in one of these zones, forced bulbs should be discarded.

**Part 2—Planting and Watering  
Instructions for Containers  
Without Drainage Holes**

**Planting** - Paperwhites can be forced using 3- to 4-inch deep decorative containers that do not have drainage holes. To force the bulbs using this system: (1) place 1 to 2 inches of washed gravel or stones in the bottom of the container; (2) carefully, place the bulbs on the gravel or stones; and (3), subsequently, place enough gravel or stones over or around the bulbs to hold them in place.

**Watering** - Add just enough water to bring it to base of the bulbs and subsequently, maintain it at this level. Do not immerse the bulbs in water, only the basal (root) plate should be in water.

**Part 3—Planting and Watering  
Instructions for Containers  
With Drainage Holes**

**Planting** - Use a well drained, pH 6 to 7, sterilized planting medium. Any width pot can be used, it depends on the number of bulbs to be forced. However, use a pot that is 3 to 4 inches deep, and plant the bulbs with the noses even or slightly below the rim of the pot.

**Watering** - After planting, water the medium thoroughly. Then, keep it moist!

**Part 4—General Home  
Forcing Instructions**

**Temperature** - Initially, use a 60° to 65°F area in the home. When in flower, use the coolest area of the home.

**Light** - Paperwhites will flower under any light conditions. However, for best results, initially place them in a window area with a southern exposure. When the plants begin to flower, remove them from direct sunlight and place plants in coolest area of the home. This helps to prolong the flowering of the plants.

**Fertilization** - None is required for forcing.

**Diseases and insects** - If healthy bulbs are purchased, no pests are generally encountered.

**Reference:** De Hertogh, A. A. 1996. *Holland Bulb Forcer's Guide, 5th ed.* International Flower Bulb Centre, Hillegom, The Netherlands.

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