



Narcissus tazetta

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Petite Gardenscapes

Sensible designs for the weekend gardener

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Special Interest Articles:

- Forcing bulbs
- Keeping track
- Container gardens

Timely Tip:

When bringing plants inside for the winter, consider replacing some of that heavy and expensive potting soil with styrofoam chunks, packing peanuts or crumpled up cell packs in the bottom of a large pot. Make sure the plant has plenty of root room.

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Forcing spring

Gardeners, we've had a frost of a sort, and (in Wisconsin at least) day after dreary day of rain. This should be glorious weather, raking leaves, putting in bulbs, but we've been hunkered down inside waiting for spring to come. It looks like a loooooong winter if our autumn lasted two weeks! What to do? Once you've got those leaves mulched and in the compost heap, and if you were lucky enough to get the bulbs planted outdoors for a gorgeous display, think about creating an earlier spring display indoors with forced bulbs, like these freesias.



nextday-bulbs.co.uk

You need to start now, though. While supplies are still in nurseries, grab some tulips, daffodils, crocus, scilla, paperwhite narcissus, and hyacinths.

You'll need a container that isn't too tall- about 4-5 inches tall. Cover the hole with a broken clay shard, so water drains, but the soil doesn't leak out. Spread a layer of soilless potting mix; set the bulbs upright on it. If you're forcing tulips, place the flat edge facing out, as that's where the first leaf will come from. Place the bulbs close together, but not touching. Fill the pot almost to the rim with more potting mix and water thoroughly.

NOW- this is important: bulbs have a variety of cooling needs.

Tulips and daffodils need 12 weeks of chilling, and 4-5 weeks before blooming after the chilling.

Hyacinth (Hyacinthus orientalis) needs 10 weeks, but blooms just one week after that. Others like **Paperwhite Narcissus** (Narcissus tazetta) need 1-2 weeks in a cool location, and will

bloom 4-6 weeks later. **Amaryllis, Freesia, Calla Lilies, Autumn Crocus and Siberian Squill** (Scilla siberica) need no chilling time at all.

Lily of the Valley (a rhizome, not a bulb) and **Dutch Iris** (Iris reticulata) (below) will bloom 3-4 weeks after planting in a room at 65 degrees.



commons.wikimedia.org

Once your bulbs have emerged from the "chilling-out" keep them watered, but not flooded. Introduce them gradually to warmer rooms. If they are brought from chilly to very warm rooms, the plant will grow too fast and blooms will "blast". They will last best in a room that's 60 degrees at night. Turning the container will keep the foliage and flowers erect. Whether you're a procrastinator or not you **can** have spring blooms.



Keeping Track in the Garden

While we're waiting for spring to come round again, how about organizing those garden plants?

Binder Style

The easiest system: a 3-ring binder with the plastic sleeves for either photos or baseball cards will hold your plant tags neatly- and you can see the info on the back of the tag, too. And you can use a system of colored dots to remind yourself of the plant's good points (buy more)aggressive nature or demise (never buy again) —you get the idea.



Filing Card Style

Another system is to keep a file box of 3 x 5 index cards with pertinent information: Common and botanical name, where it is in your garden, when and where you bought it, height and width, how it grows, etc. Add a photo or the picture label. You can file these alphabetically or by location in your garden. The downside is it's a labor intensive system.

Whichever way you choose, use this time indoors to review what you have, how you liked it, and by the time you are ready to order those new plants for summer, you'll have a firm idea of what's in the garden, and which plants you want more of. Now **that's** organized!

Cool Tool -Folding Pruning Saw



A very good tool to have on hand when it's time to prune those shrubs- between Super Bowl Sunday and St. Patrick's Day-IF you can stagger through the snow to find the stems! The Fanno 10 inch folding pruning saw is like many others- sharp teeth cut that through thick branches, and because it's blade is only 10 inches, you have more control over the tool, and can work in confined spaces with more safety. It's also a tool that is useful if you are old and short, like me. Many have an economical price range-\$20-50. Christmas is coming.....

Comfort Cookies

Martha Edmond's Comfort Cookies

This recipe was at the back of a mystery novel featuring herbalist China Bayles, written by Susan Wittig Albert.

I made these for a committee who eyed them suspiciously, but after sampling, came back for seconds and thirds.

- 1 c. sugar
- ½ c. butter or margarine
- 1 egg, beaten
- 1 c. grated zucchini
- 2 c. flour
- ½ t. cinnamon
- ½ t. cloves
- ½ t. salt
- 1 t. baking soda
- 2 T. finely chopped fresh basil (I substituted 1 t. dried)
- 1 c. chopped nuts
- Oven-375 degrees

Directions:

Cream sugar and butter; add egg and beat. Add grated zucchini, alternately with dry ingredients which you have mixed together. Stir in basil and nuts. Drop by small spoonfuls onto greased cookie sheets and bake 12-15 min. 3 dozen





Hf42.com

'...crabapples have long-lasing
Fruits to display'

*Elizabeth O'Connell,
monthly contibutor and
Ozaukee Gardener
columnist for the
Ozaukee Press*



Pbase.com

Seasonal Containers by Elizabeth O'Connell

This time of year homeowners are cleaning out their gardens and filling backyard compost bins and municipal collection centers with discarded garden refuse. Ironically, in just a few weeks, many of them will join the throngs of shoppers visiting garden centers to purchase some of these same materials to festoon their homes for the holidays. Everyone could save money and time and shop for seasonal decoration in the garden before heading out to the store.

A wide variety of materials are available from the garden if you've planned ahead. Grape vines can be twisted into bases for wreaths and hydrangeas, roses and other flowers can be dried for winter use. But even if you've already cleaned up your garden there's still time to collect your own free holiday decorations from the yard.

Once the temperatures have dropped below freezing, it's easy to find material to decorate outdoor window boxes and containers. Start with the evergreens if you have them. Arborvitae has an airy appearance and flat branches. Pine and fir

have full bottlebrush shapes. Juniper offers clusters of blue berries. Spruce has short, sharp needles in shades of blue and green. It's good for outdoor arrangements but it isn't ideal for indoor use since many people find its odor unpleasant. Even errant branches of sprawling groundcover junipers can be harvested.

When collecting greenery look for branches that must be trimmed to preserve the structure of your trees. That means clipping branches that are overgrown or crossing, are obstructing sidewalks or growing too close to the house. Also look for shaggy branches on clipped hedges of yew and boxwood.

If you're lucky enough to have any of the trees you probably also have pine cones. Wear gloves when you collect them to avoid getting sap on your hands. They can be used in outdoor arrangements straight from the yard but need to be cleaned if used inside.

For interior use, first work a brush into the crevices of the cones to remove surface dirt like needles and bugs. Then put the brushed cones into a sink which has had a

cup of vinegar mixed into very warm water. Scrub each cone and then let dry them on pads of newspaper for three to five days. Once dry you can immediately use them or deck them out with glitter or paint.

Also look for the colorful branches of yellow twig or red twig dogwood. These shrubs need pruning to encourage colorful new growth as well as to control size so don't be afraid to cut a few branches. The clean white of small birch boughs also makes a good contrast against evergreens.

Gather branches from crabapples which have long-lasting fruits to display. Witch hazel branches may have the streamers of their late autumn flowers as well as jingle bell shaped seed capsules. Some area gardens like mine also have hollies to clip. Only the female plants will have red berries but the shiny, green leaves on the males are attractive, too. Just be careful handling them since the stiff leaves can cut your skin.

Don't forget to look in the flower bed for material, too. Many gardens will have colorful rose hips to collect. These



are the seed capsules that swell after the rose petals have fallen off the plants. Many hips are almost an inch in diameter and vivid orange. Christmas ferns have leathery leaves that are evergreen.

well into winter and others like ostrich ferns have stiff, spore-bearing fronds to harvest. Groundcover ivies may be evergreen as well. The skeletons of coneflower and globe thistle seed heads can

be collected and spray painted as accents, too, even if the birds have already stripped the seeds from them. Add colorful ribbon and found objects like feathers to complete your seasonal

containers. It's a last gift from the garden to brighten the dull months of winter without emptying your wallet.

Plant Disorder of the Month

You approach your plant, and clouds of white flying insects soar up from the plant. Whitefly (*Trialeurodes vaporariorum*) are winged insects less than 1/8 inch long, live on the undersides of leaves, are sap-suckers that leave a sticky honeydew-like excretion on the upper surfaces of the leaves. The leaves may look mottled and generally the plant's health will decline. Many indoor and outdoor plants are affected.

Prevention- not too

Greenhouse Whitefly



Planetnatural.com

practical: bring a parasitic wasp in to feed on the critters.

Control is, in this case, better than prevention. Insecticidal soap which you can make by adding a few drops of liquid soap to a pint of water will make an effective spray.

"What's wrong with my Plant?"
Steven Bradley

BULB OF THE MONTH

This month's bulb isn't hardy in our area, zones 4-5, but is included in our spotlight because it's such an incredibly fragrant bloomer when grown as a forced bulb. *Narcissus tazetta* practically springs out of its bulb pot to remind us in winter of all the scents spring and summer bring to us, and to give us hope that indeed, the long winter will end and we will be back in our gardens again.

Picture courtesy of papagenos.com