**March Flower of the Month: Daffodil**

Daffodil is the Flower of the Month for March and for good reason—it is the perfect symbol of spring’s near arrival. Also known as jonquil, narcissus and paper white, those terms are actually individual species in the Narcissus genus.

The symbolism of the flower is probably one of the most well-known. Legend says the flower is named for the gorgeous Greek youth, Narcissus. Upon discovering his reflection in a pool of water, he was so entranced by his handsome visage that he couldn’t drag himself away from the view. He wasted away to his death, and thus was borne the term *narcissism*.

In the wild, you’ll find daffodils growing naturally across Europe, Asia and northern Africa. 

**A Recognizable Variety**

March’s Flower of the Month comes in a wide range of blooms, but each is very similar in appearance, making the species easy to identify. The blooms grow atop slender, holly stems with no leaves. Some havesingle blooms (with six petals). Others have double blooms (with 12 or more petals). Larger-size blooms grow individually, while miniature versions grow in clusters. 

The most common color is yellow, but the flowers also are available in pink, yellow, peach, orange, cream and white, plus bicolors of these hues.

**A Note of Caution**

Because daffodils contain crystalline alkaloids in the leaves (and the bulbs of potted plants), if they are eaten, they can cause digestive, nervous system and even cardiac disorders. A few species cause mild to severe contact dermatitis in some people. So if you have small children or pets who may be tempted to taste our Flower of the Month for March, put them out of reach and use gloves to handle them if you are prone to allergic reactions. (You’ll sometimes hear this referred to as “daffodil itch.”)

**Daffodil Vase Care**

To get the longest vase life from your flowers, follow these easy-care steps:

1. Remove the stems from the vase every two to three days (or when the water becomes discolored or cloudy—a sign of bacteria growth, which inhibits water uptake). If your arrangement includes flowers in addition to daffodils, you may need to change the water even more frequently. Daffodils release a sap that can clog the stems of other flowers and cause them to wilt prematurely.
2. Dump the vase water, wash the vase with warm, sudsy water and then rinse thoroughly.
3. If your arrangement is only daffodils, fill the vase only partway with fresh water and the appropriate amount of flower food. This Flower of the Month prefers shallow water.
4. Using a sharp knife or scissors, cut about 1 inch from each stem at an angle. Always remove any foliage that may be underwater when you replace the stems into the vase.
5. Make sure to display your bouquet in a cool location. Keep it out of direct sunlight and out of the draft from heating and air-conditioning vents.
6. Keep the flowers away from fruits and vegetables, too. As produce decays, it omits an odorless, colorless and harmless gas called ethylene—at least it’s harmless to humans. To daffodils, however, ethylene will cause the plants to wither and die.