

Narcissus pseudonarcissus

[Synonyms : *Narcissus lobularis*, *Narcissus obvallaris*]

DAFFODIL is a bulbous perennial. Native to Europe it has large yellow-white flowers with a frilly-edged, darker yellow trumpet.

It is also known as Affadyl, Affodil, Affrodil, Averill, Bellflowers, Bell-rose, Bull rose, Butter and eggs, *Cenhinen Bedr* (Welsh), Churn, Cowslip, Crow bells, Cuckoo-rose, Daffadowndill, Daffydilly, Daffy-down-dilly, *Dafodilo* (Esperanto), Dillydaffs, Easter lily, Easter rose, Eggs-and-bacon, Fairy bells, *Fleur de coucou* (French), *Gelbe Märzblume* (German), *Gelbe-Narzisse* (German), *Gelber Jakobsstab* (German), Giggary, Gold bells, Golden trumpets, Gooseflop, Goose-leek, Gracie daisies, Gracie day, *G'settes* (Channel Islander-Guernsey), *G'zettes* (Channel Islander-Jersey Norman-French), Hen and chickens, Hoop petticoats, *Jonquille* (French), Julians, King's spear, Lady's ruffles, Lent-cocks, Lent lily, Lent pitchers, Lent-rosen, Lents, Lenty cups, Lenty lily, Lily, *Lus a' chròmchinn* (Scottish Gaelic), *Lus an chromchinn* (Irish), *Narcis* (Dutch), *Narciso* (Spanish), *Narciso de los prados* (Spanish), *Narciso trombeta* (Portuguese), *Narcisse des bois* (French), Narcissus, *Narcis žlutý* (Czech), *Narcis žltý* (Slovak), *Osterblume* (German), *Osterglocke* (German), *Påsklilja* (Swedish), Porillon, Queen Anne's flowers, St. Peter's bell, Saffron lily, Sunbonnets, Tenby daffodil, *Trombone* (Italian), *Trompeten-Narzisse* (German), Trumpet daffodil, Trumpet narcissus, Whit Sunday, Wild daffodil, *Wilde Narzissen* (German), Wild jonquil, and Yellow maidens; and in flower language is said to be a symbol of deceitful, hope, delusive hope, folly, regard, sweet disposition, and unrequited love.

Warning – the whole plant (particularly the bulb) is poisonous. It can cause abdominal pain, dizziness, diarrhoea, nausea, vomiting, convulsions, trembling and death. It is poisonous for animals too.

Pseudonarcissus is made up of Greek *pseudo-* (false) and the genus name *Narcissus* components meaning 'false narcissus'.

The ancient Greeks planted daffodils near tombs and Socrates (469-399 BC), the celebrated

Greek philosopher, described the daffodil as the 'chaplet of the infernal

the way it can affect the central nervous system. Not only is the flower a Christian emblem (*Taxus*) for the Resurrection but it is also (it was known as Lent lily or lents – once often referred to in Britain as countries it is the symbol for the month was called 'lide-lily' (the 'lide' March).

Christian churches are decorated with yew daffodils at Easter and in the past daffodils for pins (money was believed to modern British custom that takes place on Maundy Thursday (the day before Good Friday in the Christian calendar) and recalls the days when certain herbs were carried in



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poisonous gods' because of system. (with yew, a flower of Lent daffodils were 'lilies'). In some of March when it signifying

(*Taxus*) and children sold be unlucky). One

nosegays as protection against noxious odours and disease (particularly plague). During the ceremony the Maundy money, usually a specially minted silver penny for every year of the monarch's age, is distributed to a similar number of elderly people by the reigning monarch. The Queen still performs this duty today and she herself is presented with a traditional nosegay that customarily contains daffodils, primroses (*Primula vulgaris*), rosemary (*Rosmarinus officinalis*), thyme (*Thymus vulgaris*), violets (*Viola odorata*) and hoary stock (*Matthiola incana*). An unusual tradition maintained still in the Scilly Isles (off the Cornish coast) is fulfilled by the Environmental Trust there. It pays an annual rent to Prince Charles, Prince of Wales (1948-) [at the beginning of the 21st Century the heir apparent to the English throne] in the form of a single daffodil for the untenanted lands. Apart from associations with the mulberry (*Morus nigra*), the famous English bard, William Shakespeare (1564-1616) also seems to be connected with daffodils. These (with rosemary, *Rosmarinus officinalis*, and pansies, *Viola x wittrockiana*) features in the buttonholes and posies carried by devotees during the annual Shakespeare Birthday Celebrations at Stratford-upon-Avon.

Superstitions abound – like other flowers that hang their heads it was believed to be unlucky to bring daffodils indoors in some parts of England and in particular this could mean that if the birds (poultry) were hatching there would be no chickens, goslings, ducklings, etc. In Wales he or she who comes across the first daffodil will receive more gold than silver in the following year (which today could have even greater significance than in the past as silver is no longer classified as a precious metal). Not only could a plant indicate the onlooker's fortune but also any daffodil pointed at would not come into flower. To dream of the daffodil is said to indicate love and happiness.

The daffodil is an emblem of Wales and in heraldic devices represents chivalry. It was also adopted in 1990 by both the Irish Cancer Society and the British Marie Curie Cancer Care Society as a reminder of the advances in the care and treatment of the disease and as a symbol of renewed hope and life. On the day declared 'National Daffodil Day' by Marie Curie Cancer Care donors have received a synthetic daffodil in token appreciation of their financial contribution to the Society.

The famous English playwright, William Shakespeare (1564-1616), includes two references to the daffodil in *The Winter's Tale*. The Rogue, Autolycus sings

When daffodils begin to peer,-
With, heigh! the doxy over the dale, -
Why, then comes in the sweet o' the year;
For the red blood reigns in the winter's pale.

and it is in the following scene that Perdita compares Spring flowers with those of other seasons and among the former mentions

..... daffodils,
That come before the swallow dares, and take
The winds of March with beauty;

Daffodils are also acclaimed in poetry. The Englishman, William Wordsworth (1770-1850) devoted a whole poem to the flowers – one that must be familiar now to generations of British schoolchildren.

I wandered lonely as a cloud
That floats on high o'er vales and hills,
When all at once I saw a crowd,
A host of golden daffodils,

Another English poet, John Keats (1795-1821), wrote

A thing of beauty is a joy for ever:
..... yes, in spite of all,
Some shape of beauty moves away the pall

From our dark spirits. Such the sun, the moon,
Trees old and young, sprouting a shady boon
For simple sheep; and such are daffodils
With the green world they live in

Daffodils are a popular ornamental plant which many people associate with Spring.

Medicinally, in the past the daffodil has had its uses. Its roots were used for an emetic (as well as an ingredient in poultices applied to reduce swellings), the flowers and bulb were recommended for treating epilepsy and 'hysterical affections', and the juice was an ingredient in a treatment for ear discharges. It was also used to treat bronchial catarrh in children and epidemic dysentery. Today the bulbs provide drugs used by the pharmaceutical industry in treatments for Alzheimer's disease.

It is the birthday flower for 23rd August.