

Growing Narcissus (Paper Whites) Indoors

Wendy Station



Narcissus (Paper Whites) are so popular in the late fall and early winter months! Unfortunately, I've found over the years that the final results can be disappointing. By the time the blooms are visible, the whole thing is so tall, it falls over. (Two samples illustrated here on the left, grown on my windowsill November 2008, watered with plain tap water.)

A recent piece titled *Pickling Your Paperwhites* by Cornell University's *William B. Miller* holds the key to answering this problem. By adding a small amount of alcohol each time you water, the plant's height is stunted dramatically...with no negative impact on the flower's blooms. In fact, they bloomed profusely; the flowers were much fuller and rich in appearance compared to the samples grown in the traditional manner. No support sticks needed! (Three samples illustrated below, grown on my windowsill November 2008 and watered with alcohol/water mixture.)

The shallow containers and pebbles (or decorative glass pieces) were purchased at a dollar store. Each bulb is nestled in so that half (or more) of the bulb remains visible. When watering, the liquid should just touch the roots of each bulb... the bulbs should not sit in the liquid. I used gin... one ounce (two tablespoons) of gin in a 1 cup measuring cup, then fill with water (7 ounces). Apparently, all types of hard liquor work in a similar fashion. (Wine, champagne and/or beer do not work due to their high sugar content.)

Enjoy!

Reference: Pickling your Paperwhites
William B Miller, Cornell University

http://www.hort.cornell.edu/department/faculty/wmiller/bulb/Pickling_your_Paperwhites.pdf

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