



## Paperwhites Fill your Home with Fragrance

Fill your home with the sweet fragrance of paperwhites this winter. Inexpensive and easy to grow, they take about four weeks to force into bloom. Planting several bulbs every two to four weeks will ensure a continual supply of their flowers and perfume.

Paperwhites can be planted in soil, pebbles or decorative stones, or water alone.

Choose any pot ó paperwhites aren't fussy ó and fill with well-drained potting soil. Plant the bulbs so that their necks are peeking out of the soil, and water thoroughly. Continue to water to keep the soil slightly moist.



Paperwhites can also be planted in pebbles or decorative stones. Begin by putting a two-inch layer of pebbles in the bottom of the container. Mason jars and clear vases work nicely. Place the bulbs on top and then cover them with more pebbles until just the tips of bulbs are exposed. Add water until it barely reaches the base of bulbs. Maintain this water level as foliage and flowers grow.

Whether planted in soil or pebbles, bulbs can be planted very close together. They look even more beautiful in groups and it may reduce foliage flop. Set newly-planted pots in a cool location for several days to encourage root growth. Then move them to a bright, sunny spot to boost foliage and flowers.

To force paperwhites in water alone, you will need a forcing vase. Forcing vases are specially designed vessels with narrow midsections that hold bulbs above the water. Place a paperwhite bulb inside and add water until it just touches the base of the bulb. Bulbs covered with water will rot.

Once flowers begin blooming, move them to a cool spot out of direct sunlight to help flowers last as long as possible.

There are several ways to manage paperwhites' only character flaw ó their tendency to fall over. Staking is common. Set bamboo stakes in place when planting bulbs or when foliage is still short. Stakes can be inserted around the perimeter of or within a container. Branches from the garden can also be used as stakes; a small obelisk is another option.

Another idea: plant bulbs in a tall clear vase where the foliage will be supported by the sides of the vase. Or give your paperwhites a shot ó of alcohol. A study by the Flowerbulb Research Program at Cornell University confirmed watering with a dilute solution of four to six percent alcohol when the foliage is a couple inches tall reduces growth and prevents flopping.

Gin, vodka, whiskey, tequila and rum are all appropriate choices; beer and wine should not be used. To calculate the correct mixture, take the percentage of alcohol on the label and divide by five. More is not better. A dilute solution of more than ten percent is toxic to bulbs. In correct proportions, paperwhites grown by this method grow one-third to one-half as tall but the flowers will remain just as large as their teetotaling counterparts.

Ziva sports clusters of large, white flowers with a spicy scent that can fill a room. It is one of the best varieties for forcing in water.

Chinese Sacred Lily shows off blooms with white petals and yellow cups. Its fragrance is a little less intense than Ziva.

For those who find the scent of paperwhites too strong and sweet, Inbal is the best choice. Its fragrance is quite delicate. Inbal should be grown in soil for the best results.

Paperwhites add a seasonal touch to your holiday home. They also make lovely gifts for family, friends and holiday hostesses.



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