



Bridal Crown daffodils.

September: a time for reflection

Chores completed now will pay dividends at Christmas and in spring

Linda Murphy

Lecturer at the Teagasc college at the National Botanic Gardens

September is a great time of year to assess the success, or otherwise, of planting done in spring: did newly planted schemes work? How did the colour schemes of various plants combine, either together or with existing plants? Did plants outgrow their allocated space or did others fail to thrive and develop as the summer progressed? Now is the time to review these aspects of planting design and make changes where necessary.

Herbaceous plants are now at full size. We might imagine that in spring we will clearly recall their height, scale and full extent. But as plants die back and deciduous trees and shrubs lose their leaves, the garden empties and we can forget. September is the time to make any changes required while we can still see how things stand. It's also a good idea to take pictures of your plant combinations when they are in flower.

This is also a great time of the year to plan for a spring display. *Narcissi* (daffodils) bulbs can be planted now and some of the most attractive varieties includes *Thalia*, which is one of the few daffodil flowers that opens out pure white. They are multi-headed and beautifully scented. It is one of the most elegant narcissus and will multiply over time.

Another lovely daffodil worth seeking out is *Sir Winston Churchill*. This double-flowering daffodil will bear clusters of dainty, white flowers, with small orange-yellow interspersed in the centre and is excellent for pots/containers, growing to about 40cm and flowering in April/May.

Planting bulbs in 2l or 3l pots in good compost with some sand added will give the bulbs a great start. Later in autumn, say late October or November, when the garden has been tidied and gaps appear in mature borders, the bulbs can be planted up and will have the advantage of a good root system.

September is a great time to divide summer-flowering plants while the soil is dry enough to work with and the ground is still warm. They have time to settle in before the first frosts of winter. Remember to water well after replanting.

As the garden is now in full maturity, it's possible to collect seeds of your

favorite plants. When cutting back and tidying up in the herbaceous border, keep paper bags close to hand for seed that could be harvested. Put in a cool, dry place until ready to process.

As September closes and the temperatures fall, try forcing some spring bulbs for a perfect display in time for Christmas.

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Hyacinths, scented freesias or amaryllis are all suitable. Plant them in free-draining compost, with the tip of the bulb just showing above the surface. Store them in a dark area to allow the roots to develop and don't forget to water.

When the new shoots appear and have grown to about 4cm, move the pots indoors to a cool area and position them away from direct sunlight. As they continue to grow, the pots can be moved to a warmer area indoors to be enjoyed over the festive season.