



***Narcissus tazetta***  
**'Grand Primo'**  
**(Grand Primo Narcissus)**

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*N. tazetta* is considered the oldest cultivated narcissus. It was known in ancient Egypt and Greece and cultivated in Britain before 1597. In 1851, Joseph Breck proclaimed them the most desirable of all the Narcissus. Tazetta narcissus are known as polyanthus narcissus or more often as just "narcissus" (as opposed to *N. jonquilla* which are known as "jonquils" and *N. pseudonarcissus* which are known as "daffodils"). The often forced paperwhite (*N. tazetta papyraceous*) belongs here. Except for a few yellow types like 'Grand Soliel d'Or', tazettas are mostly white with white, cream or yellow cups. They have clusters of many small flowers and are intoxicatingly fragrant. Due to their earliness of bloom, tazettas are often associated with freeze damage. Many a bouquet has been picked the day the "northern" blew in. As a rule, the true paperwhites are very, very, early blooming (Christmas or New Year's even), have pure white delicate flowers, and have a scent somewhere between cotton candy and fresh manure. Some love it while others despise its cloyingness. True paperwhite foliage is wide and grayish green. They are most often found naturalized along the gulf coast where the winters are mild but are fairly abundant in East Texas as well.

Later blooming types of tazetta narcissus are found as you get further away from the coast where winters are more severe. These are apparently very old hybrids between the paperwhite and the Chinese Sacred Lily (*N. tazetta orientalis*) The earliest blooming of these is the delicate but somewhat "rag-tag" *N. tazetta*

*italicus*. It has narrow, twisting petals and small, pale yellow cups and in East Texas often blooms above stunted, freeze nipped foliage in mid January. The most often found tazetta narcissus in the South are several hard to distinguish variants each of the later blooming cultivars 'Pearl' and 'Grand Primo'. The "Pearls" seem to be whiter and earlier, while 'Grand Primo' is the latest and initially upon opening has a citron-yellow cup. It appears that 'Grand Primo' was sold and passed around for years under the name of 'Grand Monarque'.

The two common forms found in East Texas are 'Grand Primo' with cups that fade to white and 'Grand Primo Citronier' with cups that stay almost yellow. They normally bloom in mid to late February and at least in most years avoid severe freeze damage. Although not found naturalized in East Texas, the commonly sold double flowered form known as 'Erlicheer' performs very well and like other narcissus makes an excellent dried flower.

The large bulbs of tazetta narcissus are best planted in the summer (June, July, August, or September) as they begin root growth in October and shoot growth in the fall and early winter. However, due to their toughness, they can realistically be transplanted at any time of the year including full bloom. They are best planted in full sun locations and left undisturbed, as they should bloom and survive indefinitely. In addition to abandoned East Texas homesites, an outstanding source for tazetta (polyanthus) narcissus is William R. P. Welch, P.O. Box 1736, Carmel Valley, California 93924-1736. Telephone: 408-659-3830.

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