



BULB KNOW HOW

A flower bulb is really an underground storehouse and flower factory. Within the bulb is just about everything the plant will need to sprout and flower at the correct time. Spring-flowering bulbs are hardy and are planted in the fall. Summer-flowering bulbs are tender and are planted in the spring. The hardy spring-flowering bulbs can survive (and need) the cold winter months in the ground, but tender summer-blooming bulbs cannot survive harsh winters. They must be planted after the last frost in spring and dug up in the fall and stored indoors over the winter. An exception to this rule is the lily – many are hardy and can be planted spring or fall.

Selection: If you buy your bulbs in a nursery, shop early in the fall for the best selection. Choose the largest, firmest, heaviest bulbs with outer scales that have not been bruised. Never buy dried up bulbs. Larger bulbs produce large flowers, but smaller bulbs will catch up in a season or two.

Storing: Bulbs should never be exposed to heat before planting, even for a short period of time. If you don't plant them immediately after purchase, store bulbs in a dry, dark place where the temperature doesn't exceed 50° F. Get them in the ground as soon as temperatures are consistently cool (daytime temperatures should not exceed 70° F) from mid-September to mid-October.

Soil Conditions: Soil should be moist and crumbly on the day you plant your bulbs. Water several days before planting if soil is dry, but make sure it isn't soggy-wet when you put the bulbs in. Excessive moisture can rot the roots, while the bulbs will not put out roots at all if the soil is too dry.

Preparing the Soil: Loosen soil deeply where you plant bulbs. If your soil is sandy, plant bulbs slightly deeper than in soil with a high clay content. Bulbs thrive in loose, well-drained soil, adding organic matter is a plus. Sprinkle some bonemeal or superphosphate into the bottom of each hole or trench; follow container directions.

Environment: Most spring-blooming bulbs prefer a sunny or partially sunny location. A great spot is under or near trees before they leaf out.

Depth: Plant bulbs at a depth three times their diameter. Measure across the base of the bulb, not the top. If you want annuals such as petunias in the same bed, plant bulbs six to eight inches deep to give both "generations" of flowers enough room.

Make sure the narrow, pointed top of each bulb is pointed UP. Carefully examine non-pointed varieties for small eyes or bumps that will form roots and point them DOWN.

Mulching: Several inches of winter mulch (wood chips, compost, straw, etc.) will help conserve soil moisture, keep down weeds, and afford protection from extreme temperature fluctuation. Remove the mulch when two-inch shoots appear above the ground in the spring.

Watering: Water bulbs thoroughly after planting. In a dry fall, continue watering right up until winter. In the spring, water bulbs until they finish blooming. Do not remove leaves until they have yellowed. The leaves produce sugars to replenish the bulb's energy supply and help it multiply for the following year.

Fertilizing: A commercial fertilizer such as a 5-10-5 combination should be worked into the soil around bulbs. Use one handful per cluster of three to five bulbs, or two pounds for each 5' X 10' planting area. Bonemeal is also a good fertilizer for bulbs. Use two tablespoons of bonemeal per bulb. Work the fertilizer into the soil beneath where the bulbs will be planted, then soak the planted area to settle the bulbs. Fertilize the bulbs again when the foliage begins to emerge in the spring. If possible, incorporate the fertilizer into the ground and water thoroughly. Thereafter, apply half the labeled amount every month until foliage begins to yellow.

Tulips: Tulips should be dug and divided every three years. Hybrids only last one or two seasons, but red and yellow tulips can multiply for many years.

FLOWERING SPRING & SUMMER BULBS

| Early Spring Bulbs In Order of Blossoming | Length of Bloom Zone 5: mid-March to mid-May |
|--|---|
| Snowdrops | 2-3 weeks |
| Winter Aconites | 1-2 weeks (2-3 weeks if several varieties are planted) |
| Snowflakes | 1-2 weeks |
| Dwarf Irises | 1 week (4-6 weeks if several varieties are planted) |
| Crocuses | 2 weeks (4-5 weeks if several varieties are planted) |
| Chionodoxas | 3-4 weeks |
| Squills | 1-2 weeks (2-3 weeks if several varieties are planted) |
| Early Daffodils | 2 weeks (3-4 weeks if several varieties are planted) |
| Early Tulips | 1-2 weeks (2-3 weeks if several varieties are planted) |
| Grape Hyacinths | 2-3 weeks (4-5 weeks if several varieties are planted) |

FLOWERING SPRING & SUMMER BULBS

| Spring Bulbs In Order of Blossoming | Length of Bloom Zone 5: mid-May to mid-June |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| Anemones | 2-4 weeks (8 weeks if several varieties are planted) |
| Daffodils | 1-2 weeks (4-5 weeks if several varieties are planted) |
| Hyacinths | 2-3 weeks (4-5 weeks if several varieties are planted) |
| Fritillarias | 1 week (2 weeks if several varieties are planted) |
| Tulips | 1-2 weeks (4-6 weeks if several varieties are planted) |
| Late Squills | 2-3 weeks (4 weeks if several varieties are planted) |
| Ranunculus | 3-4 months |
| Ixias | 2-3 weeks (4-5 weeks if several varieties are planted) |
| Stars-of-Bethlehem | 1-2 weeks (6-8 weeks if several varieties are planted) |
| Erythroniums | 1-2 weeks (3 weeks if several varieties are planted) |

| Early Summer Bulbs in Order of Blossoming | Length of Bloom Zone 5: mid-June to first frost |
|---|---|
| Alliums | 2-3 weeks (all summer if several varieties are planted) |
| Caladiums | Colorful foliage early summer to frost |
| Tuberous Begonias | Early summer to frost |
| Lilies | 3-4 weeks (all summer if several varieties are planted) |
| Cannas | 10-12 weeks |
| Gladioluses | 2-3 weeks (10-12 weeks with successive plantings) |
| Callas | 10-12 weeks |
| Tigridias | 6-8 weeks |
| Tuberoses | 2-3 weeks (6-8 weeks with successive plantings) |
| Agapanthuse | 6-8 weeks |

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