

Spring Bulb Planting

*FEW GARDENING EXPERIENCES CAN RIVAL THE SPLENDOR
OF A BULB GARDEN IN FULL BLOOM...*

Bulb Planting

Bulbs can be planted in beds, in rock gardens, in groundcovers or under trees and shrubs. Most species prefer partial shade, so avoid planting them in areas which receive direct mid-day sun. Positioning bulbs at the proper depth helps ensure their longevity. Generally bulbs should be planted so the bottom rests at a depth that's two-and-a-half times the bulbs diameter. In well-drained or sandy soil, plant an inch or two deeper to increase longevity and discourage rodents. Because bulbs look best in planted groups, you are better off using a garden spade instead of a bulb planter, which encourages you to plant bulbs singly. A spade makes it easier to set bulbs side by side in large groups. Plant groups of bulbs in holes no smaller than a dinner plate, or dig wide, curving trenches and position the bulbs in the bottom.

Interplanting provides maximum flowers in the smallest space and eliminates bare spots when bulbs go dormant. To create a succession of bloom and foliage, plant perennials around the bulb holes. As the bulb foliage dwindles, the perennials will grow up, camouflaging the bulbs' yellowing leaves. This interplanting technique works in both formal and informal gardens.

Bulb Housekeeping

Remove spent flowers of large-flowered bulbs as soon as they fade. The plants' energy is then channeled into forming large bulbs and offsets rather than into setting seeds. Allow smaller bulbs to set seed, so they self-sow and form ever-larger drifts.

Whatever else you do or don't do, resist the temptation to remove bulb foliage while it is green: the green leaves nourish the bulb and next year's flower buds. Major bulbs need fertilizer, but at the proper times. Work a high-phosphorus plant food, such as rock phosphate or super phosphate, into the bottom of the holes when you plant. Do not apply bone meal where digging animals are a problem: its scent attracts animals. Thereafter the bulbs need nitrogen. Fertilize with a balanced fertilizer in early spring when the shoots emerge and again after flowering to fuel foliage and bulb growth for next year's flowers. Or, apply bulb booster (a slow-release formula) to plantings in fall.

Hardy bulbs sometimes need to be divided. After a number of years in the garden, some bulbs produce offsets that cluster around the base of the parent bulb. Crowded foliage and diminished flowering are signs that the bulb clumps need to be divided. After the leaves die back, dig up the bulbs and carefully separate the offsets from the parents. Replant the bulbs immediately.

Some corms, such as gladiolus, crocus, and freesia, produce small structures call cormels around their base. The cormels, similar to the offsets of bulbs, can be removed and replanted to increase your supply. When plants are dormant, remove the cormels. Immediately replant cormels of hardy plants like crocus and colchicum. For tender plants like gladiolus, store the corms and cormels in a cool, dry place over winter and plant in spring. For scaly bulbs like lilies, you can dig the bulbs in spring and remove the small scales that form around the outside. Replant immediately.



*PLANTING A BULB GARDEN SETS ONE'S SITES
FORWARD TO THE PROMISE OF A BRIGHT AND BEAUTIFUL SPRING!*

Bulb Locations

Planting bulbous and tuberous plants under evergreen trees is not advisable. The most suitable trees for bulbs and tubers are alder, ash, birch, cherry/Japanese cherry, oak and fruit trees. Low shrubs such as Cotoneaster varieties, *Symphoricarpus chenaultii* "Hancock" and *Hedera helix* can be given a colorful face-lift with hardy narcissus varieties in spring, lilies in summer or Colchicum in autumn.

Planting bulbs in containers is always a good choice. It will give you the ultimate in flexibility by allowing you to locate displays at your front door, along well-traveled walkways, on your stairs, and anywhere else where you can enjoy them.

Bulbs for Water and Rock Gardens

Banks of natural and artificial waterways and lakes are ideal for planting flower bulbs that prefer a somewhat moist habitat. These include various types of *Allium*, *Arum italicum*, *Fritillaria meleagris*, *Leucojum vernum*, *Iris siberica*, Scilla and Chionodoxa and different kinds of narcissi. Other species of bulbs are perfectly suited for the open, sunny habitat and dry, warm soil of rock gardens. Varieties with graceful, lined or delicate leaves can be especially recommended. These include botanical tulips, *Iris reticulata*, *Allium moly* and Erythronium and some types of narcissi. Low-growing bushy plants such as *Anemone blanda*, *Oxalis adenophylla* and *Allium karataviense* with their roundish inflorescence are also visually attractive.

Bulbs in a Border of Perennials

Borders planted with perennials are dreary in early spring unless they contain some flower bulbs. You can enjoy your borders for a longer period if you plant bulbs which bloom in March/April and attune the choice of perennials to the summer-flowering assortment. The sprouting perennials camouflage the dying leaves of the spring-flowering bulbs.

