

SPRING BLOOMING BULBS

Sources: *VanBloem, bulb.com*

When to Plant

Spring bulbs should be planted before the ground freezes and while bulbs are still firm and dormant. If you purchase bulbs in the fall but can't get them planted right away, store them in a refrigerator or a place where the temperature stays around 40°F (4°C). This will keep them dormant until you can plant.

Where to plant

In general, bulbs should be planted in sunny areas, however, crocus, narcissus and hyacinths will also flower in partial sun.

Soil

The optimum soil pH for bulbs is 6-7 (neutral) because the phosphorous that aids root development may be less effective if the soil is too acidic. Good drainage is essential. If drainage is a problem, consider amending the soil, planting on a hillside or in raised beds or containers.

Depth and Spacing

The rule of thumb is you should dig a hole three times as deep as the height of the bulb. Refer to the package for variety-specific information.

Fertilizer

Your bulbs will put on a great flower show every year if you work in slow-release bulb fertilizer when you plant in the fall. Use an organic fertilizer with a higher middle number (phosphorous) to help root development during the winter. Some supplemental spring feeding makes sense for flowering bulbs, especially if you use a slow release fertilizer. Although the bulbs are using their own reserves for food, they are expending a lot of energy and need to pull nutrients from the soil for the following year.

Watering

Bulbs begin immediately to form their roots, so give them plenty of water upon planting, then only if the soil is dry or during a dry period.

Dividing Clumps

If, after 10 years or so, your bulbs don't flower as well as they used to and the plants seem overgrown, dig the clumps, divide them and replant.

Post Bloom

The most important thing you can do for your bulbs in the spring is to let the foliage grow as long as it can. This is how the bulbs feed themselves. You can cut off the spent flower stalks, but let the foliage ripen naturally. Try camouflaging dying foliage with pretty annuals, groundcovers and perennials.

TIP: Bulbs that are typically shunned by deer and rodents: Narcissus (Daffodils), Alliums, Scilla, Chionodoxa, Muscari, Galanthus, Puschkinia, Frittilaria. Use a bulb dip or lay down wire mesh to prevent squirrels from digging up bulbs. If voles are a problem, use hardware cloth or plant bulbs in submerged plastic pots.