

Forcing Spring Bulbs



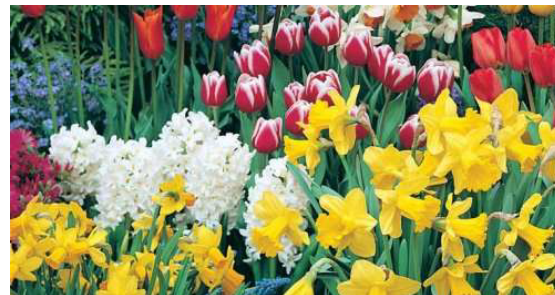
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Spring time comes early when you force bulbs into bloom indoors. During the frigid, dreary months of winter, you'll enjoy the fragrance of hyacinths, cheerful color of tulips, and admire the unique tete-a-tetes.

Forcing most spring bulbs into bloom requires 8 to 15 weeks of chilling, though there are varieties that can be ready for prime time in just two weeks.



Chill Out!

When chilling bulbs in the refrigerator, store them away from fresh fruits and vegetables that can emit ethylene gas and damage the flowers developing inside the bulbs. Chill potted and bulk bulbs in closed paper bags.

Most flowering bulbs require a period of 35-45 degrees F in order to root and flower. Be sure that bulbs are firm and free for nicks and bruises, and that the roots haven't sprouted yet.

Potting Up

Most bulbs will do well if grown in potting mix. Always start with clean pots and fresh mix.

Plan ahead in autumn, purchase bulbs. Plant the bulbs of your choice in any type of pot with a drainage hole. Choose a pot that's at least twice as deep as the bulbs to allow for proper root growth. Fill the pot half full of soil-less potting mix.

Place as many bulbs as possible in the pot, without letting them touch. A 6 inch -wide pot holds up to six tulips, three daffodils, or 15 minor bulbs, like crocuses or grape hyacinths.

Cover the bulbs with potting mix, leaving their tips showing. Water the bulbs thoroughly. Label with name and date; loosely cover the pot with a paper bag. Place in cool (35-45 degrees F), dark storage for chilling.

Check moisture in pot periodically. Keep soil damp, but not wet. When chilling is complete, you'll see roots poking out of the bottom of the pot and green sprouts emerging at the bulb tips. It's now time to move the bulbs into a warm room.

When flower buds form, move potted bulbs into a sunny spot. Keep the soil damp. When flowers appear, move the pot out of direct sunlight to make the blooms last longer. You can also plant them when the winter season is over and watch them pop up in a few years in your garden!

Chilling & Blooming Times

Daffodils: 12-15 weeks of chilling; 2-3 weeks to bloom after chilling

Tulips: 10-16 weeks of chilling; 2-3 weeks to bloom after chilling

Crocus: 8-15 weeks of chilling; 2-3 weeks to bloom after chilling

Grape Hyacinth: 8-15 weeks of chilling; 2-3 weeks to bloom after chilling

Iris Reticulata: 13-15 weeks of chilling; 2-3 weeks to bloom after chilling

Snowdrop: 15 weeks of chilling; 2 weeks to bloom after chilling

Hyacinth: 12-15 weeks of chilling; 2-3 weeks to bloom after chilling