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## Spring Flowering Bulbs

Need some color in you yard in early spring? Fall planted bulbs are the way to go! Hardy spring flowering bulbs are easy to grow and make a great addition to any garden.

Bulbs are amazing little packages with roots, stems, leaves and flowers stored inside for use when temperature and moisture conditions are favorable. True bulbs, such as tulips, if sliced in half vertically, have distinct layers inside that will become the various plant parts later. Corms, such as crocus, are a mass of storage tissue with no distinct rings. With a few simple steps in care, these little packages can provide beautiful flowers just when we need them most, in early spring.

Spring flowering bulbs are versatile components of the landscape, They can be tucked in between shrubs and perennials, sprinkled through the lawn, spread around trees and even grown in containers. They look fantastic in mass plantings. The foliage from most bulbs dies down by June or July and annuals can be planted on top of them to provide continued color through the summer. Bulbs can also be planted to come up through some groundcovers, such as Candytuft and Ajuga.



'Mickey Mouse' tulip

Bulbs look best when you plant them in drifts or clumps rather than single rows or isolated plants. Free flowing arcs and sweeps are great for all but the largest bulbs, such as Fritillaria, which are best used in small groups as accents.

The best time to plant any of the spring flowering bulbs is in fall after the soil has cooled and before the ground has frozen. They can be planted in winter if the ground is not frozen. But this may impede or delay blooming the following spring. Most bulbs need full sun or part shade while in flower, but can be planted under deciduous trees, provided the tree's branch structure is not too dense. As the trees leaves expand and create shade, the bulbs' light requirements will be decreasing as their foliage dies away. Since tree roots drain a lot of nutrients from the soil, it is especially important to fertilize bulbs planted around them. Scilla bulbs can tolerate shade well.



Good drainage is a must for most bulbs to have a long life. Poets' Narcissus and Camassia can tolerate wet soils. As much as possible, work organic matter such as compost or peat moss into the soil. Fertilizing bulbs at planting time with Bulb Tone or Bulb Food will help promote larger, brighter flowers. Fertilize the bulbs again with the foliage begins to emerge in spring. Fertilizing bulbs each fall and spring is a good idea, and especially important for tulips, hyacinths and large allium.

# Spring Flowering Bulbs... cont

If you have trouble with squirrels and chipmunks digging up your bulbs, you might try soaking the bulbs in Ropel before planting. The bitter taste will make the critters think twice. An alternative is a physical barrier, such as making a "bulb cage" out of chicken wire. The leaves can grow up through the holes, but the animals can't get to the bulbs. Some people have reported success with the use of blood meal or hot pepper flakes on the soil surface above the bulbs. In this case the smell and/or taste repels the animals. Planting bulbs deep may also discourage the offending critters. Some types of bulbs, i.e., tulips, benefit from deeper planting and may live longer as a result.

Speaking of depth, in general, bulbs should be planted at a depth equal to 3 to 4 inches times the height of the bulb. For example, crocus should be planted 3 to 4" deep, while daffodils should be planted 6 to 8" deep. Spacing of bulbs is noted on the tear off tag or each box or on the bag. Generally, small bulbs are spaced fairly close for best effect, while larger bulbs need more room.

After planting, be sure to cover soil with 2 to 3" of mulch, shredded leaves or pine needles. This will suppress weeds, moderate soil moisture and temperature, and add to the finished look of the bed.

For best flowering in the future, it is important to remove old blooms/seed heads from bulbs, especially large bulbs like tulips and daffodils. Some, such as allium blooms, can be cut and dried for use in arrangements. It is also imperative to leave the foliage on until it turns brown. These leaves are producing food to be stored for next year's blooms.



*Making the world beautiful  
one flower at a time.*