

Fall into Spring!



An early blast of wintry weather has most of us gardeners already looking forward to spring. Now is the time to plan our gardens and plant spring blooming bulbs. There is still a good selection of flowering bulbs available at your local garden center and on line.

Crocus and hyacinth are the earliest bloomers. Snow crocus are hardy flowers that will bloom in late winter or early spring. Grape hyacinths with their clusters of small grape like blossoms bloom at about the same time.

The larger Dutch varieties of crocus and hyacinths will bloom a few weeks later. There are also a few varieties of early blooming tulips. Next up are the daffodils and more tulips. All are available in many colors and sizes. Allium, late varieties tulips and iris are the late spring bloomers.

Flowering bulbs need sunlight. Early spring bloomers can be planted in areas that will be shaded later in the season. Once leaves are present the later bloomers will need full sun.

Well-drained soil is important for all blooming bulbs. Bulbs will rot if they stay too wet so, if your soil has a lot of clay, work in some organic material. Add compost or manure by working such into your soil loosening the dirt to about 12" deep. This will improve drainage and allow easier root growth. Be sure to avoid planting in areas where water will stand in winter or spring.

Plant your bulbs 2-3 times as deep as the bulb is tall. Plant larger bulbs deeper than the smaller varieties. Plant them with the root end (the wide end) down and the sprouting end (the pointed end) up. Fall planted bulbs will put out roots before winter. Be sure to water them in after planting - not too much but enough to reach down to the bulbs. Mulching your bulb bed will help them avoid freezing through the winter. Mulch will also help balance out water and temperature changes throughout the growing season. Be sure to include the depth of the mulch layer in your planting depth. The earliest bloomers, such as crocus and grape hyacinth, do not need mulch.

Plant them individually or in groups – your preference. Bulbs are great to add around perennials, or as edging along walkways or driveways. Naturalize by planting small groups and individual bulbs in your yard. Smaller flowers are more impressive when planted in groups.



Starting a new bulb bed is a great time to get a soil test. If you don't have time before planting this year, mix a little bone meal into your soil before planting to provide phosphorus. Phosphorus is the main element bulbs require. Once your bulbs sprout through the dirt, fertilize with a small amount of 10-10-10. Do not fertilize once they start to bloom. Fertilize summer and fall flowering bulbs monthly until they start to bloom. After the blooms have faded, allow the foliage to remain until it naturally fades. The fading greenery is storing up energy for next year's growth. Most bulbs will bloom year after year. Tulips are the exception and are usually treated as annuals in our area.

Gophers love bulbs, especially tulips. To discourage them, plant your bulbs together in a trench that is a little deeper than your normal planting depth. Line the bottom of the trench with chicken wire and put a layer of soil over the wire. Place your bulbs and add more soil. Cover with more chicken wire. Be sure the ends and edges of the wire come together so the gophers can't get to your bulbs. Add more soil to cover completely.

For more information you may visit our website at www.tulsamastergardeners.org. From the home page, choose the *Lawn and Garden Help* tab and click on *Flowers*. You will find information on bulb selection, planting along with some great videos.

Bulbs are a great addition to your garden. They will reward you with a beautiful spring next year and many years to come. You will be glad you did.

Get answers to all your gardening questions by calling the Tulsa Master Gardeners Help Line at 918-746-3701, dropping by our Diagnostic Center at 4116 East 15th Street (please call ahead to ensure the office is open) or by emailing us at mg@tulsamastergardeners.org.

RESOURCES:

Cornell Cooperative Extension
Missouri Botanical Garden
Tulsa World, "Ask A Master Gardener", Tom Ingram