

# Tips on Growing Beautiful Bulbs

When buying bulbs look for those that are free of deep cuts or soft places. Choose bulbs that seem heavy and firm for their size.

When deciding where to plant bulbs, locate places that have well drained soil and get at least six hours of full sun in the season when the bulb foliage will be up and green. Try not to plant them in rows. Most bulbs look much more natural in clumps or drifts. When planting, dig a hole that is two to three times the depth of the of the height of the bulb. If your bulb has no visible roots, set the bulb so the pointed end is facing up. With some bulbs it is difficult to tell which end is up but don't worry, the bulb will right itself in the ground. Most Spring blooming bulbs don't need additional fertilizer as their energy is stored in the bulb. When foliage appears, you can fertilize lightly with a balanced slow release fertilizer but do not use bone meal. Adding blood or bone meal may encourage animals to dig up your bulbs. Summer blooming bulbs respond well to regular fertilizing.

Resist the temptation to cut or braid bulb foliage after the flowers fade. It is vitally important that the foliage goes through its entire life cycle to ensure the bulb gets enough nutrition to feed it through its dormant stage. Once the foliage is mostly yellow and pulls away easily, it is time to release and discard it. To be safe, wait two months after your bulb finishes blooming to remove the foliage if it is still mostly green.

As a rule, buy and plant spring flowering bulbs in the fall and summer/fall flowering bulbs in the spring. Most, however, can be planted out of season. They may lose a season's bloom but will survive and bloom the next year. Many gardeners divide large bulb clumps just as the foliage is dying away. It is easy to find them, and they are fully rejuvenated and ready to go dormant. Large bulb clumps that have had fewer blooms each year will profit from dividing. This is the time to share extras with friends or move a few bulbs to a new place.

For the most beautiful display of bulbs, plant some for every season. Those in the Narcissus family have selections that bloom as early as December or January and others that bloom in April. By planting a selection of different cultivars you can extend the daffodil season for almost 5 months. As soon as these finish, come the summer bulbs, Crinums, gingers, rain lilies and more. You will want to finish the year out with the fall bloomers such as Spider lilies and Oxblood lilies. Remember, bulbs take minimal care and surprise you throughout the seasons.

## Quick Bulb reference from Smith County Master Gardeners

All daffodils and Jonquils are Narcissus. Narcissus is Latin, Daffodil is English.

Do NOT plant bulbs in rows. They look much more natural in clumps or drifts

Plant them in the fall, right after you buy them.

Buy firm bulbs with no soft spots or cuts. They should feel heavy for their size.

Never store bulbs in a plastic bag!!

Choose a year round sunny site, not just winter sun.

Be sure they have good drainage. Amend if necessary with compost, humus, fine bark, or peat moss 2-4 inches deep.

If you want, you can fertilize with superphosphate (4-10-6) in the bottom of the hole. Then you can fertilize again when you see foliage. Plain bone meal is incomplete and attracts animals.

Plant your bulbs at a depth of 3 times their diameter.

Mark the place where you plant them.

After the flowers fade, leave the leaves for 2 months before mowing or cutting. Do NOT braid them.

Divide them in July when they are perfectly dormant.

If animals are a problem, use berry baskets or chicken wire.

Hybrid tulips and Dutch hyacinths need to be chilled a minimum of 45 days before planting. Plant after Christmas and by mid January. We DO NOT sell these bulbs because they will not return reliably the second year.

