

## GLADIOLUS

Gladioli are showy, colorful plants that belong to the Iris family. They are easily grown from enlarged underground stems called corms. The flowers come in a variety of colors and are borne on a long spike. They bloom successively from the base to the top and make excellent cut flowers.

### Planting

Gladioli need full sun in moist well-drained soil. Very sandy or heavy clay soils should be amended with organic materials such as compost or peat moss.

Plant corms after soil warms up in the spring, from mid-April to mid-June. Corms can be planted every 10 to 14 days for a succession of blooms. Corms bloom 65-100 days after planting. Plant the last set to bloom before frost. Gladiolus can be planted in rows but usually will need support. They are effective planted in groups of at least five.

Before planting, treat corms with a bulb dust (combination insecticide/fungicide). Place corms at a depth of three to four times their diameter, and 4 to 6 inches apart. Work a complete fertilizer such as 5-10-10 or 10-10-10 into soil at planting time and side dress later when plants are actively growing.

### Watering

Water gladioli regularly during growth. Continue watering after flowering as long as leaves are green.

### Insects

Gladiolus thrips are the most common problem and are usually present wherever gladioli are grown. Thrips feed by rasping the leaves, flowers and corms. The damaged surfaces turn gray in color and flower spikes often fail to bloom. Young thrips are tan in color; mature thrips are black.

Common diseases, Insect problems, and chemical control information can be found at WSU extension website: [Hortsense](http://Hortsense)

### **Winter storage**

Dig corms when leaves begin to die back, generally 6 to 8 weeks after blooming. Cut stalks to about 2 inches above corm. Spread corms to dry for several days. If leaves happen to be green at lifting time, allow them to turn brown in storage before cutting back.

Corms should be stored in dry, frost-free area. Temperatures in the 40's (F) are ideal but corms will keep well at higher temperatures if they are kept dry and have good air circulation. Don't remove husks when storing gladioli as they help corms retain moisture.

As corms dry, a corky layer forms between the original mother corm and the new corm. Some gardeners break off and discard the mother corms in the fall, others prefer doing it in the spring.

### **Propagation**

Cormlets are small bulblets at the base of the corms. Remove cormlets in the fall and store in paper sacks. In the spring, plant cormlets one or two inches deep. Plant close together - about 20 per foot. Plants will grow several inches in the first year.

Dig and store in the fall and plant again the following spring. In two to three years, a full-sized corm will be produced. Mature corms with more than one bud can be cut apart and planted in the spring. Gladiolus can also be raised from seed.