



BULBS FOR THE INLAND NORTHWEST

A flower bulb is an underground storehouse and flower factory. Within a bulb is just about everything the plant will need to sprout and flower at the correct time.

Growing Flowers from Bulbs

All flowers from bulbs come in many kinds and colors. Bulbs are sometimes called "good natured" because they are easy to grow. This is because a bulb is a storehouse of food. The leaves do their work of making living matter from the plant foods in the soil and air. This living matter is stored through the winter months in the bulbs.

Spring-flowering bulbs

Spring-flowering bulbs should be planted before the first of November. These hardy spring-flowering bulbs can survive (and need) the cold winter months in the ground.

Summer-flowering bulbs

Summer-flowering bulbs are tender and cannot survive harsh winters. They must be planted after the last frost in the spring and dug up in the fall and stored indoors over winter. An exception to this rule is the lily - many are hardy and can be planted spring or fall.

Choosing Bulbs

Choose the largest, firmest, heaviest bulbs with outer scales that have not been bruised. Never buy dried up bulbs. Larger bulbs produce large flowers, but smaller bulbs will catch up in a season or two.

Bulbs should never be exposed to heat before planting, even for a short period. If you don't plant your bulbs immediately after purchase, store bulbs in a dry, dark place where the temperature doesn't exceed 50° F.

Soil

Soil should be moist and crumbly on the day you plant your bulbs. Water several days before planting if soil is dry, but make sure it isn't soggy-wet when you put the bulbs in. Excessive moisture can rot the roots, while the bulbs will not put out roots at all if the soil is too dry.

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Planting Bulbs

Plant bulbs at a depth three times their diameter. Measure across the base of the bulb, not the top. If you want annuals such as petunias in the same bed, plant bulbs six to eight inches deep to give both "generations" of flowers enough room.

Plant bulbs close together (3 to 5 inches apart) if you want thick masses of flowers. Plant them farther apart (6 to 8 inches) for rows.

Make sure the narrow, pointed top of each bulb is pointed UP. Carefully examine non-pointed varieties for small eyes or bumps that will form roots and point them DOWN.

Mulching

Mulching keeps the bulbs from alternately freezing and thawing in the winter. During the rest of the year, mulch reduces weed growth, moderates soil temperature, and protects soil tilth (consistency).

Watering

Water bulbs thoroughly after planting. In a dry fall, continue watering right up until winter. In the spring, water bulbs until they finish blooming. Do not remove leaves until they have yellowed. The leaves produce sugars to replenish the bulb's energy supply and help it multiply for the following year.

Fertilizing

A commercial fertilizer such as a 5-10-5 combination should be worked into the soil around bulbs. Use one handful per cluster of three to five bulbs, or two pounds for each 5' X 10' planting area. Bone meal is also a good fertilizer for bulbs. Use two tablespoons of bone meal per bulb. Work the fertilizer into the soil beneath where the bulbs will be planted, then soak the planted area to settle the bulbs.

Fertilize the bulbs again when the foliage begins to emerge in the spring. If possible, incorporate the fertilizer into the ground and water thoroughly. Thereafter, apply half the labeled amount every month until foliage begins to yellow.

Cutting Flowers

Cut flowers in the morning or in the evening. Use a sharp knife to cut the stems. A pair of scissors crushes the stem instead of cutting it sharply.

Special Note for Tulips

Tulips should be dug and divided every three years. Hybrids only last one or two seasons, but red and yellow tulips can multiply for many years.

FLOWERING SPRING BULBS

Early Spring Bulbs (Zone 5: mid-March to mid-May) in Order of Blossoming

	Length of Bloom
Snowdrops	2-3 weeks
Winter Aconites	1-2 weeks (2-3 weeks if several varieties are planted)
Snowflakes	1-2 weeks
Dwarf Irises	1 week (4-6 weeks if several varieties are planted)
Crocuses	2 weeks (4-5 weeks if several varieties are planted)
Chionodoxas	3-4 weeks
Squills	1-2 weeks (2-3 weeks if several varieties are planted)
Early Daffodils	2 weeks (3-4 weeks if several varieties are planted)
Early Tulips	1-2 weeks (2-3 weeks if several varieties are planted)
Grape Hyacinths	2-3 weeks (4-5 weeks if several varieties are planted)

FLOWERING SPRING & SUMMER BULBS

Spring Bulbs (Zone 5: mid-May to mid-June) in Order of Blossoming

	Length of Bloom
Anemones	2-4 weeks (8 weeks if several varieties are planted)
Daffodils	1-2 weeks (4-5 weeks if several varieties are planted)
Hyacinths	2-3 weeks (4-5 weeks if several varieties are planted)
Fritillarias	1 week (2 weeks if several varieties are planted)
Tulips	1-2 weeks (4-6 weeks if several varieties are planted)
Late Squills	2-3 weeks (4 weeks if several varieties are planted)
Ranunculus	3-4 months
Ixias	2-3 weeks (4-5 weeks if several varieties are planted)
Stars-of-Bethlehem	1-2 weeks (6-8 weeks if several varieties are planted)
Erythroniums	1-2 weeks (3 weeks if several varieties are planted)

FLOWERING LATE SPRING & SUMMER BULBS

Summer Bulbs (Zone 5: mid-June to first frost) In Order of Blossoming

	Length of Bloom
Alliums	2-3 weeks (all summer if several varieties are planted)
Caladiums	Colorful foliage early summer to frost
Begonias, tuberous	Early summer to frost
Lilies	3-4 weeks (all summer if several varieties are planted)
Cannas	10-12 weeks
Gladioluses	2-3 weeks (10-12 weeks with successive plantings)
Callas	10-12 weeks
Tigridias	6-8 weeks
Tuberoses	2-3 weeks (6-8 weeks with successive plantings)
Agapanthus	6-8 weeks