

LOOKING AFTER YOUR BULBS

- Be sure to water planted bulbs thoroughly, especially in dry weather, because adequate moisture is essential for flower buds to form properly.
- Stake taller-growing varieties such as gladioli, lilies and dahlias to prevent damage to their graceful flower spikes
- Feed with a liquid fertiliser just as the flowers are dying to help build reserves in the bulb, which will create the flowers for next year's display. Otherwise, bulbs need no extra food.
- When clumps of bulbs begin to flower unreliably, it's a sign they need dividing. Carefully lift a clump using a hand fork, divide the bulbs and replant in smaller

- groups. Finally, help boost their re-growth by feeding.
- Most flowering bulbs can be left in the soil over winter, but some may require protection eg tall-growing tulips, gladioli and dahlias. If in doubt, check the packet. These should be dug up after flowering, once the leaves have turned yellow and dried off naturally, then cleaned and stored in a dry, rodent- and frost-free place until replanting the following autumn or spring.
- Some lilies won't flower in limey soils and lily bulbs can rot in damp weather conditions. Reduce the likelihood of this by planting each bulb on its side, upon a layer of gravel.

BULBS IN CONTAINERS

Many bulbs look great in containers and can be used to brighten up specific areas of the garden as other flowers finish.

- In containers you can plant at different depths with tall-growing bulbs planted towards the bottom of pots and small-growing bulbs near the top, at about twice their own depth. Use good-quality potting compost.
- For spring, try narcissus at the lowest level, followed by a layer of tulip bulbs some 5cm higher. For summer, mix lilies and anemones, and for autumn nerines and colchicum. Then finish off with bedding plants such as polyanthus, primroses, pansies, violas and lobelia.
- Later, the compost can be removed down to the top layer of bulbs, and replaced with new compost and summer or winter bedding, and again the following season. This process can be repeated for another year - but on the third year remove the bulbs and start again.



WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- Fork
 - Hand trowel
 - Containers
 - Potting compost
 - Bulb fibre
 - Basket
 - Sharp sand or grit
 - Liquid fertiliser
 - Bulbs
- For more information:
www.rhs.org.uk/advice
www.plantforlife.info

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THE EASY GUIDE TO GROWING BULBS



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BULBS THROUGH THE SEASONS

If you want to create colour year after year, flowering bulbs, corms or tubers are one of the fastest, easiest, most cost-effective ways to create a bright array. Autumn's the time for planting bulbs that will flower between January and May the following year, such as daffodils, snowdrops, bluebells, tulips, hyacinths and crocus; while spring is the time to plant most summer-flowering bulbs including gladioli, irises, dahlias, nerines, agapanthus and lilies (which can also be planted in autumn). But don't worry if you miss the main planting season, as many bulbs can be bought growing in pots from your garden centre or nursery.

You can create a mass display, add height to a flower bed, try a small clump of a low-growing variety in a border or grow them in pots. All the nourishment for the flower is stored in their bulbous roots. After they have bloomed, many bulbs can be left in the soil to come up again the next year - so simply check the information on the packet and get planting!

CHOOSING YOUR BULBS

PLANTING PLAN

Before buying and planting your bulbs, you might like to draw up a planting plan. Choose a mixture of colours and varieties, and plants of different heights and flowering times to create real interest. You could plant tulips near the rear of your flowerbed and crocus in front, or gladioli at the back and begonia in the front. Alternatively, add a clump of bulbs to provide a natural touch under shrubbery or on the lawn. It's best to group colours and sorts so that one part of your garden is in full bloom, rather than a few single bulbs dotted around.

MIX & MATCH

Flowering bulbs are ideal for mixing with other bulbs or bedding plants in containers, or for planting amid other plants that may bloom at a different time of year and most will tolerate a variety of soils and are very easy to grow. The packets carry picture cards and full descriptions, but ask at your garden centre or nursery if in doubt.

HEALTH CHECK

Look for firm bulbs with no signs of insect attack on their surface. If possible, plant them straight away.



SPRING-FLOWERING BULBS



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Species	Plant	Flowers	Colour	Height
<i>Cyclamen coum</i>	autumn	Nov-Jan	pink or white	10cm
snowdrop	autumn	Jan-March	white	15-30cm
<i>Eranthis</i>	Sept-Dec	Jan-Apr	yellow	10cm
(winter aconite)				
Crocus	Sept-Oct	Feb-March	purple, yellow, white	10-15cm
<i>Iris reticulata</i>	autumn	Feb-March	blue, purple, yellow	10-15cm
(dwarf iris)				
<i>Narcissus</i>	Aug-Sept	Feb-May	yellow, peach, white	15-40cm
(daffodil)				
Tulips	Sept-Nov	Feb-May	yellow, red, purple, pink & white	20-75cm
<i>Anemone nemorosa</i>	Oct-April	March-May	blue, pink, white	10-20cm
<i>Fritillaria imperialis</i>	autumn	April-May	yellow, orange	150cm
<i>Muscari</i>	autumn	April-May	blue	15cm
(grape hyacinth)				

HOW TO PLANT THEM: Planting time 20 minutes

- Do not plant when soil is very dry, waterlogged or frozen; store until conditions improve.
- Plant several bulbs in one large hole or trench to save time and effort, making sure they are not touching.
- Because bulbs develop extensive roots, plant them in well-dug soils, and start by digging to a depth of at least twice their height.
- Most bulbs prefer a well-drained position, so in wet soils, place a 2.5cm-deep layer of sharp sand or grit in the bottom of each planting trench or hole to prevent rotting.
- Some bulbs may not flower properly in dry soil, so improve moisture retention by digging a 3.5cm-deep layer of moist compost in the bottom of each trench or hole.



SUMMER-FLOWERING BULBS



SUMMER/AUTUMN-FLOWERING BULBS

Species	Plant	Flowers	Colour	Height
<i>Allium</i>	early autumn	May-July	purple, pink, white	24-60cm
<i>Camassia</i>	autumn	May-June	blue, white	30-90cm
<i>Anemone</i>	Jan-April	May-July	blue, pink, red, white	25-30cm
<i>Lilium</i> (lily)	Feb-June	June-Sept	white, yellow, orange, pink, red	45-100cm
<i>Tigridia</i>	April	Jun-Oct	red, orange, pink, yellow, mauve, white	1m
<i>Freesia</i>	Apr-Jun	Jul-Sep	white, yellow, pink, mauve	30-60cm
<i>Gloxinia</i>	Jun	July-Sept	red, blue and white	15-30cm
<i>Begonia</i>	spring	Jul-Oct	white, pink, red	15-45cm
<i>Dahlia</i>	Mar-May	Jul-Oct	white, yellow, orange, pink, red	25-135cm
<i>Canna</i>	Jun	Aug-Oct	yellow, pink, red, orange	60-120cm
<i>Gladiolus</i>	Apr-Jun	Aug-Oct	white, yellow, pink, red	1-1.5m
<i>Nerine</i>	Mar-May	Sept-Oct	pink	50-75cm
<i>Colchicum</i>	late spring	Sep-Nov	pink, mauve, white	7.5-25cm

- Because the leaves and flowers need to die down and feed the bulbs in order to flourish the following year, they can look unsightly once they start to fade. Avoid this by planting them first in a plastic basket with the bottom third or quarter filled with garden soil placed in the planting hole as described. Once they have flowered, lift the basket out and place somewhere inconspicuous until the leaves have died down.
- Plant bulbs twice as deep as the height of the bulb (check on the packet). If winters are very cold or summers very dry, plant them slightly deeper. Large bulbs should be planted at intervals of about 12cm; smaller bulbs at 10cm.
- Placing a cupful of bulb fibre under the bottom of many bulbs will prevent root problems and aid establishment.
- Cover the bulbs with loosened soil and then water them in.

