

BULBS

Bulbs are so versatile they can be used in formal plantings, garden meadows, woodland gardens, borders, rock gardens, containers and forced indoors. With just a little bit of planning, spring blooming bulbs can enhance your landscape as well as your flower beds. And there is hardly anything else that gives you more year after year for less of an investment.

Spring flowering bulbs offer a wide variety of colors that can draw attention to the beautiful bark on your birch or dress up that area in the corner of your yard. And keep in mind that evergreens provide a wonderful backdrop for spring bulbs. Bulbs work with most everything else in the landscape including groundcovers, perennials, wildflowers, trees and shrubs, annuals and even other bulbs.

Do I need a plan before planting spring bulbs in my landscape? It isn't essential that you have an overall plan before you begin planting bulbs, but you should keep a few things in mind. Bulbs look best in groupings and can be confusing when too many types and colors are planted together. Season of bloom varies over a period of six weeks and you need to be careful to plant the bulbs that bloom when you want them.

What do they mean by naturalizing bulbs? Naturalizing is simply planting bulbs in patterns and locations similar to the way they grow in the wild. In informal yards, this can add a dimension of beauty that is difficult to achieve any other way. Bulbs look natural interplanted with wildflowers in open settings or in woodlands, especially minor bulbs like snowdrops, crocus and species daffodils and tulips. Are some bulbs better for naturalizing than others? Sometimes bulbs are sold for "naturalizing." Often this indicates a variety that is found growing in a natural setting, but it may also mean that they are a smaller, more affordable size bulb for mass planting.

What does perennialize mean? This term refers to planting bulbs that multiply reliably and are long-lived in locations that encourage spreading.

How do I choose the best varieties of bulbs for my landscape? Several factors should be considered when choosing your bulbs. Where do you want to use them? For rock gardens or small intimate areas you might choose some of the smaller, species type bulbs. Choose bulbs you like from among the varieties that naturalize (grow as they would in nature and multiply readily) and perennialize (live for years).

How do I choose good quality bulbs? Horticare Nursery strives to carry only top quality, top size bulb and works hard to keep them in excellent condition until you buy them. Look for bulbs that are solid and relatively heavy for their size and avoid bulbs with deep cuts, bruising or mold. Factors to consider are color, size and shape of the bloom. Also check the height, fragrance and season of bloom.

Do bulbs require any special site conditions? The two requirements that are essential to success with bulbs are well-drained soil and lots of sun in their blooming season.

When should I plant bulbs in fall? The approximate dates for planting bulbs in the fall ranges from late September through October. Your goal is to have the bulbs planted long enough for them to root fully before the ground freezes and this varies slightly according to the type of bulb. Tulips take the longest to root and should be planted in late September, early October. Daffodils

and most other bulbs take fewer weeks and can be planted successfully throughout October. Be careful not to plant too early, or you may lose the bulbs.

How far apart and how deep should they be planted? This varies with different varieties, too. Large bulbs like tulips and daffodils are planted from 6" to 8" deep and minor bulbs vary between 3" to 6" deep. It usually says on the package how deep to plant a bulb, but if you have any question, please ask. Spacing varies on bulbs too, depending on the effect you want to achieve. On average, space tulips and daffodils 4-5 per square foot. Check the package for recommended spacing. Bulbs should never touch each other when planted.

Should I mulch bulbs? Bulbs are the showiest with a backdrop of groundcovers, perennials or mulch. Mulching also keeps bulbs from being splashed with dirt, detracting from their looks.

Can I plant bulbs in the grassy areas of my yard? Bulbs can be planted in your lawn by using a bulb planter or a bulb earth auger. However, dealing with the foliage after the bulbs bloom presents a major problem. The foliage has to gather food for several weeks after the bulb blooms or it probably won't bloom the next season. Crocus are often used in the grass because their foliage grows about the same height as grass and mowing doesn't bother them. Often, daffodils are planted in areas that are only mowed a few times each season.

Do bulbs work well in with my perennials and groundcovers? This is the perfect planting. Interplanting bulbs with perennials and groundcovers is a great combination that can add several weeks of color to the beginning of the season. Simply plug the bulbs in between existing root systems. As their flowers fade, the perennials and groundcovers have developed enough to camouflage the bulb foliage. Probably the most successful and simplest combination is to create a bed of nothing but daffodils and daylilies. By carefully choosing a wide range of colors, heights and bloom seasons, this combination can result in an amazing show that will last for months.

What about with trees and shrubs? Choosing bulbs that complement the blooms or foliage on trees and shrubs is a great idea. For instance, a drift of grape hyacinths blooming beneath a magnolia is breathtaking. And early rhododendrons work well with white daffodils. Imagine clusters of delicate species tulips under your stately blue spruce. Let your imagination be your guide, but try to avoid trees with heavy surface roots that will choke out the bulbs.

Should I fertilize the bulbs as I plant them? Bulbs will settle in best if you provide them with bulb food at the time of planting.

What about the foliage after the bulbs have bloomed? Removing the foliage early is the number one reason bulbs fail to bloom the second season. Bulb foliage should be cared for like any other actively growing plant, receiving fertilizer and water. Since the foliage has to stay until it begins to wither naturally, annuals are excellent companions to bulbs. They will grow to cover the bulb foliage as it starts to look tired.