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SPRING FLOWERING BULBS

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MH 102

Spring flowering bulbs are among the most useful plants for the home gardener. They will bloom for many years as attractive features in the landscape, with very little care. They are not subject to serious insect or disease problems. In addition, they may be used to provide colorful flowers as potted plants in the home during the winter and spring months.

Planting Location

Spring flowering bulbs are ideal as a source of early blooms in the flower bed or border with other perennial plants. They bloom primarily in March, April, and May. Annual flowers may then be planted to provide color during the summer and fall.

Some of the low growing types like crocus and the miniature species of daffodil, hyacinth, and tulip, are especially useful for rock gardens, at the edge of the terrace, or in front of shrubs in the foundation planting. Spring flowering bulbs are also useful for naturalizing in a woodland garden, or in the partial shade of trees.

Most spring flowering bulbs should be planted in groups or clumps of one type or color, to give sufficient mass to be effective in the landscape scene. They may be used in informal groups in the border, or in geometric designs in formal flower beds.

All spring flowering bulbs will produce the best growth and finest flowers when planted in a sunny location. They will, however, tolerate partial shade, and produce relatively satisfactory blooms under such conditions.

Soil and Fertilization

Spring flowering bulbs should be planted in a fertile well-drained loam soil. The bulbs may rot, and usually will make poor growth in a heavy wet soil.

The fertility level of the soil should be improved before the bulbs are planted. Apply 4 pounds of 5-10-5 fertilizer per 100 square feet, and mix this thoroughly with the top 6 inches of soil.

Time of Planting

Most spring flowering bulbs should be planted as soon as they are available in the fall. In general, the best time to plant is about 2 to 4 weeks before the average date of the first frost in your area. If possible, the planting should be completed by the time of the first frost. This allows the bulbs to develop roots before the ground freezes.

The standard type tulips are an exception to this recommendation. They should be planted 2 to 4 weeks after the first fall frost. The species and hybrid tulips should be planted at the earlier suggested dates.

Depth of Planting

Spring flowering bulbs will tolerate more variation in planting depth than may be implied by the very precise charts which are contained in some publications. A more practical approach is to relate the depth of planting to the size of the bulb, and the type of soil in which they are to be grown. Such a concept can be remembered and applied easily when the planting is being done in the garden.

In a well-drained loam soil, most species of spring flowering bulbs should be covered to a depth equal to about 3 times the diameter of the bulb. In sandy soils they should be planted somewhat deeper, and in heavy soils at a shallower depth.

There are a few exceptions to the above recommendation. The standard type tulips should be planted deeper and covered about 4 times the height of the bulb. Species and hybrid tulips are planted according to the 3 times height recommendation.

Frequency of Replanting

Most spring flowering bulbs will grow satisfactorily and continue to bloom for many years without replanting. New bulbs will be formed and the clumps will gradually increase in size. As the bulbs become crowded the flowers will usually become smaller.

To promote increased vigor and larger blooms, the bulbs may be dug up about every 5 years and replanted. Dig the bulbs during the early summer after the foliage becomes brown and dead. In most cases the bulbs should be replanted immediately to avoid excessive drying.

The tulip is an exception which should be stored in a dry place and replanted in the fall about a month after the average first frost date. Also, tulips which are used as a part of a formal bed, may be dug each year so the bulbs may be sorted for replanting to ensure uniform size and blooming date.

Lilies are particularly long lived plants when they become established. They should be allowed to grow in the same location for many years before they are replanted.

Care of Established Spring Flowering Bulbs

To promote continued vigorous growth, your bulb planting and perennial border should be fertilized each spring about a month before the average date of the last frost. Broadcast about 3 pounds of 5-10-5 fertilizer per 100 square feet and scratch into the top couple inches of soil. Use about 4 pounds on infertile sandy soils.

A mulch of sawdust, peat moss, wood chips, or other organic material will conserve soil moisture and help control weeds. Apply a one inch layer and renew it yearly to maintain a continued mulch of this depth.

Narcissus Types and Characteristics

	<u>Height</u>	
I. <u>Trumpet</u>	18-24	One flower per stem, corona as long or longer than the perianth limbs.
II. <u>Large Cup</u>	18-24	One flower per stem, corona more than 1/3 but less than equal to length of the perianth limbs.
III. <u>Small Cup</u>	16-18	One flower per stem, corona less than 1/3 the length of the perianth limbs.
IV. <u>Double</u>	16-18	Double flowers, one or more per stem.
V. <u>Triandrus</u>	8-15	Narrow foliage, one to six flowers per stem, drooping, perianth limbs relatively long, pointed and reflexed, similar to cyclamineus.
VI. <u>Cyclamineus</u>	8-12	Very early flowering, one flower per stem, may be drooping, perianth limbs relatively long, pointed and reflexed.
VII. <u>Jonquilla</u>	10-14	Two or more flowers per stem, fragrant, narrow foliage, long lasting as cut flowers, perianth & corona are yellow.
VIII. <u>Tazetta</u>	14-20	Poetaz. Several flowers per stem, fragrant, small cup. This division includes the Paper White Narcissus.
IX. <u>Poeticus</u>	16-18	Pure white petals, very short scarlet cup, 1 or 2 flowers per stem, fragrant.
X. <u>Species</u>	6-10	Wild forms, miniatures, and hybrids.

Tulips Types and Characteristics

	<u>Height</u>	
<u>EARLY FLOWERING</u>		
<u>Kaufmanniana</u>	6-8	Large single tapered flowers open almost flat in the sun. For borders and rock gardens.
<u>Species</u>	6-12	Attractive colors, with pointed flaring petals. Excellent for rock garden.
<u>Early Single</u>	12-15	Short stems. Long lasting flowers for foreground of garden.
<u>Early Double</u>	12	Short stems. Very long lasting flowers. For masses of foreground color.
<u>Fosteriana</u>	12-18	Petals flare outward. Fine for beds and border planting.
<u>MID-SEASON</u>		
<u>Darwin Hybrids</u>	24-28	Very large flowers on very strong stiff stems.
<u>MAY FLOWERING</u>		
<u>Darwin</u>	24-28	Most popular tulip. Stiff long stems. Globular to elongated blossoms. Solid and bicolor.
<u>Cottage</u>	24-28	Flowers large, egg-shaped or elongated like Darwin. Brilliant colors, many flushed with another shade.
<u>Lily-flowered</u>	22-26	Reflexed pointed petals. A Cottage hybrid.
<u>Fringed</u>	14-26	Lacinated petal edges, fringed with a different color.
<u>Parrot</u>	18-26	Large flowers with lacinated or deeply cut twisted petals, and shades of green in the center of the sepals. Curved stem.
<u>Multiflowered</u>		
<u>Broken</u>	18-24	Have 3 to 6 flowers per stem. Rembrandts, Bizarres, and Bybloemens. Striped and streaked color due to virus which may cause gradual degeneration, and may spread to other tulips and lilies. This type should not be planted.