



From the Martin's Home & Garden library

Planting Bulbs



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Planting bulbs may seem intimidating, but don't underestimate yourself! They are easy to plant, and even beginner gardeners can be successful with bulbs.

There are four types of bulbs: true bulbs (ex. tulips), corms (ex. gladioli), rhizomes (ex. irises), and tubers (ex. ranunculus).

Always read the directions provided with your chosen bulbs regarding when and where to plant in order to give your plants the best chance for blooming success.

Questions? Give Martin's Home & Garden a call at 615-867-7121!



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When to Plant Bulbs

For Summer Flowers

As cold weather ends, it's time to plant summer-blooming bulbs. Wait until the last frost is over to get them in the ground. The average last frost date in Middle Tennessee is April 15.

Summer-blooming bulbs are more tender than spring-blooming bulbs. If you want them to survive winter temperatures, you will need to dig them up and store them until the weather is more favorable.

Some of our favorite summer bloomers are begonias, caladiums, cannas, dahlias, and gladiolas. Amaryllis is naturally a summer-blooming bulb as well, though you commonly see it blooming around the Christmas season as a forced bulb.

Storing Summer-Blooming Bulbs



1. After the first hard freeze, carefully dig up the bulb and its roots.

2. Let the bulb dry thoroughly in a sheltered, frost-free area. The soil should cleanly come off the roots when the bulb is dry.

3. Find a container with a tight-fitting lid. Place a layer of either sand, vermiculite, peat moss, or newspaper in the bottom. Then, place a single layer of bulbs. Give them enough space that they won't touch each other. Repeat these layers until the container is full or until you have placed all your bulbs. Label the container so don't forget what's inside.

4. Store the container in a cool (but frost-free) and dark location until spring. Check the container occasionally to make sure none are rotting. If they are, remove them immediately.

For Spring Flowers

While you're planting your mums and pansies in the fall, start thinking about your spring garden. Planting spring-blooming bulbs in cooler weather allows them to "winter over." This period of cold activates their flowering process. A good rule of thumb to remember is to plant them when the average nighttime temperatures are about 50°.

If you purchase your bulbs before temperatures drop, don't worry. The bulbs can be stored in the refrigerator for up to 10 weeks. Keep them away from fruits that release ethylene gas, like apples, or the bulbs may rot.

Some of our favorite spring bloomers include crocus, hyacinth, irises, narcissus, and tulips.





02

How To Plant Bulbs

Placement

Bulbs don't like "wet feet." In other words – don't plant your bulbs in places in your garden where the soil doesn't drain well. Pay attention to where water tends to pool and avoid planting in those areas.

Make sure your chosen spot will get at least four to six hours of direct sunlight each day.

Keep the heights of your bulbs in mind as you decide your placement. Plant taller flowers in the back of your garden bed and the shorter flowers in front.

Bulbs look best when planted in large groups. The more the merrier! For a natural look, throw out a handful in your garden beds and plant them where they land.



Planting

1. Dig a hole to the depth of 2-3 times the height of the bulb. Amend the soil so it is well-draining, if necessary. Clear out any weeds, rocks, or other debris.
2. Add Espoma Organic Bulb-tone® to the bottom of the hole, according to the direction on the fertilizer packaging.
3. Place your bulb in the hole with its pointed end down. If it's not clear which end is pointed, place the bulb on its side; the flower will find its way to the top.
4. Cover your bulb with soil, but don't pack the soil on top. Keep it loose. Water well.



03

What Bulbs To Plant

Allium (Ornamental Onion)

Allium (zones 3-8) will give you one of the longest lasting flowers compared to other bulbs. They are resistant to deer, but they do bring beautiful butterflies to your garden.

Allium reaches a height of 2" to 4". They bloom in late spring and should be planted in the fall, before the soil freezes. Keep their soil evenly moist, but take care to not overwater.



Crocus

Crocus (zones 3-8) is one of the first flowers to bloom in the spring, even if there's snow on the ground! Their blooms contain lots of pollen for bees. But, watch out for squirrels – they have been known to dig up and eat crocus bulbs.

Crocus reaches a height of 2" to 3". They bloom in late winter to early spring. Plant crocus corms in the fall. After they have bloomed, water them when their soil is dry.



Daffodils (Narcissus)

Daffodils (zones 3-8) are resistant to deer and rabbits, but they attract lots of pollinators like butterflies and hummingbirds. They're a great addition to your rock garden!

Daffodils reach a height of 8" to 18". They bloom in early to mid-spring and should be planted in the fall. Water them when their soil is dry after they have bloomed.



Garlic & Onions

Yes, even delicious garlic and savory onions grow from bulbs! You have the opportunity to have two crops per year – they can be planted in both the spring and the fall.

Garlic and onions have different water requirements. Water garlic every few days. Onions, on the other hand, don't require as much water. However, the more you do water them, the sweeter their flavor will be.



Lilies

Lilies (zones 4-9) have been growing in gardens for over 3,000 years. They are a beautiful, easy way to add vibrant color to your garden beds!

Lilies reach a height of 3' to 4'. While most varieties, including Asiatic lilies and spider lilies, need to be planted in the fall, canna lilies and calla lilies are planted in the spring.



Tulips

Tulips (zones 3-8) are a garden classic! With blooms in solids, stripes, and every color in the rainbow, you have lots of options to choose from to get the garden of your dreams. Butterflies love them, too!

Tulips reach a height of 16" to 24". They bloom in mid- to late spring, so plant them in fall. After they have bloomed, water them when their soil is dry.





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