

What Can I Do with ALL these Bulbs I Bought?

There are several ways to enjoy all those bulbs; you can simply plant in your gardens and wait for those wonderful spring blooms. Need a little pick me up during the winter? Try forcing the bulbs in either water or in soil. Or if you're tired of digging holes in the garden beds; plant them in a container for a beautiful spring arrangement. All are easy solutions to your over buying.

PLANT IN THE GARDEN:

*Plant bulbs in soil with good drainage. This is the MOST important instruction. Moist conditions will cause the bulb to rot

*Cut as little foliage as possible when cutting flowers from your bulbous plants. The leaves and foliage are essential for storing food for next year's blooms.

*ALWAYS let the foliage die back on its own in the garden before trimming it back or digging up the bulbs. Trimming back healthy foliage will cause the bulb to not perform well next year. Do not "braid" the foliage, as this damages the foliage's ability to store food.

*Store bulbs in a dry, well-ventilated area to prevent mold or mildew. Do not store them in an airtight container.

*Label the bulbs as you plant them. Labeling prevents you from accidentally digging up the bulbs out of season.

*Do not use any strong commercial fertilizer or fresh manure when planting bulbs. A bulb nutrient such as BULB BOOSTER can be added and mixed into soil, but be careful not to sprinkle directly onto bulbs, this can burn the bulbs. Bone meal or blood meal work well also. Brent Heath (Brent and Becky's bulbs) recommends adding compost only to feed bulbs.

*Do not let the flower go to seed. Cut flowers as they fade and remove any seedpods that form. Leave the foliage to keep the bulb strong.

*Do not dry bulbs in the sun, always in the shade in a well-ventilated area.

*Do not grow tulips bulbs year after year in the same place. Sooner or later they may be attacked with a fungus disease called fire blight. Either change the soil or the location.

*Planting depth of bulbs depend on the size. A good rule of thumb is the depth should be three times the diameter of the bulb. Check individual planting instructions for specifics.

*The most effective planting technique is to plant most bulbs in clumps of odd numbers, rather than in a line. If you know the color, softer colors in front with more vibrant in the background. Group according to height and in sequential bloom patterned for a long lasting show.

*In spring sprinkle again with bulb food. This will encourage flowering and help to recharge the bulb for next year. If the weather is dry, water bulbs during the growing period.

*Tulips love to be dry in summer. Try planting them where you never water or near thirsty trees and shrubs. Well drained soil, good sun, regular fertilizing, let the foliage ripen, plant 6-8" deep. Another way is to dig bulbs when their foliage yellows, store in a cool, dry spot and replant in fall. Some varieties are just better. Dr. Klingaman recommends Darwin varieties and older varieties which will often perennialize best.

FORCE BULBS IN WATER:

For planting in pebbles; start by choosing large, plump bulbs. Next select a glazed pot or bowl, and fill partway with pebbles, place bulbs on pebbles. Add a few more pebbles to support the bulbs. Pour in water to the base of the bulbs. Don't let the bulb set in water, only the very bottom of the base should be in the water

Keep the bulbs in a warm, light place and growth should begin immediately. Keep the bulbs well watered. Flowers should appear in 3-6 weeks. They grow so fast, you can almost see them grow. You may need to stake them to keep the foliage from flopping over. To keep plants looking their best, display in a cool location. If set in a cool place like a sheltered porch where temperatures are in the 40-50's, the blooms can go on for 3 weeks. But they cannot take freezing temps. Paperwhite bulbs work best for this, but you can use hyacinths bulbs also.

FORCE BULBS IN POTS OF SOIL:

Forcing bulbs in pots of soil is even more fool-proof than forcing them on water, and it works with just about every kind of bulb.

Plant bulbs close together (but not touching) just below the surface of the soil — to leave as much room as possible for rooting. For an even more lavish display, you can set one layer of bulbs just above another, alternating so that bulbs are not directly on top of one another — but combining different types of bulbs in one pot is hard to pull off successfully since rooting and blooming times vary. Arrange tulip bulbs with the flat side facing out for a more uniform display of leaves.

Water. Set in a dark, cold place for 8-16 weeks. This could be in an unheated mudroom, attic, or garage; a cold-frame; or your refrigerator, though many refrigerators are too cold for optimal forcing. The temperature during this rooting period is critical: 40° to 48° is ideal. Avoid freezing temperatures. The best way to monitor the temperature is to use a maximum-minimum thermometer available from any good garden center.

Another way to provide a cold dark place for forcing is to dig a trench a couple of feet deep — in your vegetable garden, for example — set the pots in the bottom of it on rocks or something that will provide good drainage, and cover them with at least 18 inches of straw or other mulch.

Keep pots evenly moist but not soggy. When roots show at the hole in the bottom of a pot, and top growth has begun, bring it into a cool spot — 50° to 60°F — with subdued light for a week or two. Move to a brighter spot — a window (but not into direct sun) or under fluorescent lights — but for best results continue to keep it relatively cool (as if the bulbs were outside in the spring) as buds develop and bloom.

PLANT BULBS IN CONTAINERS:

Now is the time to plant spring bulbs in containers for those beautiful spring blooms. Be sure to pack the containers full of bulbs for the best display. Not only will these containers create focal points throughout the garden, but they will also welcome visitors at entryways and add a touch of bright color to the spring garden. This is a great solution for someone with limited garden space or only a patio to garden on.

Any bulb can be planted in a container, but tulips are best because of their simple form and infinite choice of colors. You can combine different types of bulbs in a single container, but be sure they bloom at the same time, or you will have that unsightly dying foliage marring your display. Planting only one type of bulb per container gives you maximum impact. Try staggering bloom times in different containers for a succession of blooms from March through mid-May.

PLANTING:

Use a 24" container with good drainage.

Use 40 tulips, 40 large flowered daffodils, 50 small-flowered daffodils or 100 minor bulbs, like Crocus, Muscari, Scilla, or Iris species. I like to use either the tulips or large daffodils mixed with Crocus.

Use a good grade of potting soil and fill the bottom third of container, mix in some time released fertilizer, such as Miracle Grow or Osmocote or bone meal, or bulb fertilizer. Add more potting soil to fill container to the recommended planting depth of the bulbs you are using. Add bulbs and finish filling container with soil, being sure to leave at least 1/2" space between the surface of the soil and the top of the container for easy watering.

If you are planting a container with different species of bulbs, plant the larger bulbs first, cover them with soil and then plant the smaller bulbs at their recommended planting depth. See diagram.

Water planted container thoroughly, then water periodically throughout the winter. You don't want the bulbs sitting in soil that is too wet, the bulbs will rot.

OVERWINTERING:

I set my planted containers either in an unheated garage or in a protected area of the gardens until late Feb. or early March, when the bulbs start to emerge, and place at focal points or throughout the garden. I place mine on the front porch for the winter, overplanted with violas. You could also use pansies.

After the flowers have faded, plant the bulbs in the garden. Tulips tend to not do well for me after the first year, so I compost them. Have fun and enjoy!

GIVE-AWAY FOR NOV.

Bridal Crown Daffodil-Division 4-Double

Multiple stems per bulb, each stem has 3-6 white and saffron flowers, one of the earliest of the double to bloom. It is a great forcer and is one of the best looking grown in pots. Heavenly fragrance. Classic from 1949.

12-14" tall, early to mid spring.