

Fall Planted Bulbs

Frequently Asked Questions

What You'll Need:	
Essential Items	Desirable Items
Soil Enhancer	Bulb Planter
Dutch Bulb Food	Soil Activator
Root Stimulator	

1. How do I plant fall bulbs?

A good general rule is to plant bulbs at a depth three times their heights. For example, daffodil bulbs that are 2 to 2 ½ inches high should be planted about 6 to 8 inches deep. And remember, if you add mulch on top; factor that into your planting depth.



Most fall planted bulbs only produce one flower per bulb, so it is best to plant them in groupings. Larger bulbs such as tulips and daffodils are best planted in groups of at least 10 and smaller bulbs such as crocus are showiest when planted in groups of 25 or more.

The best method is to dig out the entire area that you want to plant, rather than digging individual holes. Dig the area as deep as is required for the largest bulbs. If you have smaller bulbs to be planted in the same area, create little mounds of soil to place them on that will bring them up to the proper planting depth. Place your bulbs in the dug out area with the pointed end up and the flatter end at the bottom. Add bulb food and refill the area with soil that has been mixed with organic matter such as Soil Pep.

2. When should I plant fall bulbs?

Fall (spring flowering) bulbs can be planted anytime in the fall before the ground freezes. They must be planted in the fall rather than in the spring because they require a long period of cool temperatures to spark their growth process that causes them to flower. In east Idaho this can be done as early as late August or September, and should be completed by late October.

For best results, plant bulbs as soon as possible after you purchase them. Your bulbs need to establish strong root systems, before the frosts of winter set in and the bulbs enter a new cycle in preparation for spring blooming.

3. How do I prevent rodent damage?

To prevent rodent damage spray bulbs with Ropel Bulb Protectant before covering them with soil. Then cut a piece of chicken wire 3 inches larger on each side than the size of bulb bed. Bend the edges to create a shallow box top shape and set the chicken wire on top of your newly planted bulbs. Push the 3-inch edges down into the soil. To complete the planting add a 2 to 3 inch layer of mulch. This does 3 things. It hides the chicken wire, further insulates the bulbs and gives the beds a finished look.

In the spring when the bulb foliage begins to emerge, remove the chicken wire so that the plants can grow freely.

4. Why don't my tulips come back year after year?

In our climate many tulips do come back for several years, but many varieties only last a year or two, so you need to plant a few bulbs each fall to keep the display as fresh and beautiful as it can be. Species tulips and Darwin Hybrids are more reliably perennial than others. The darker hued Darwin hybrids do better than the pastel ones.

To encourage tulips to come back plant them in an area that gets good drainage and plant them deep, about 8 inches from the bottom of the bulb to the top of the soil. Fertilize in the fall and spring with liquid **Save-A-Tree** or granular **Hi Yield Bulb Food**. After the blooms have faded remove the spent flowers and allow the foliage to die back naturally. This helps the bulbs store up energy for next year's bloom.

5. How should I store my bulbs until I am ready to plant them?

If you can't get your bulbs planted as soon as you would like, keep them in a cool, dry place, such as a garage or basement. Warmth and moisture will signal the bulbs to start growing. Check on them occasionally to be sure they aren't getting moldy or soft and plant them as soon as you can.

6. What should I do with the foliage after the blooms have faded in the spring?

With perennial bulbs, such as daffodils, you need to leave the foliage in tact until it begins to turn brown, often eight weeks after the flower fades. It is the leaves, that manufacture the food through photosynthesis, that help the bulb prepare for blooming next year, so don't cut it back. It's okay to remove the spent flower, but be sure to leave the stem intact.

One solution to camouflaging the fading foliage is to over-plant your bulbs with cool season annuals such as pansies or even perennials, which will emerge and begin to gain height about the time the foliage is beginning to appear unsightly.

7. When can I transplant daffodils?

Early summer is a good time to transplant daffodils that need relocating. Because the foliage is visible you will have no trouble seeing them in the ground. Just remember to keep the leaves green as long as possible to recharge the bulb for next year's flower. For best results, wait until the foliage fades to move your daffodils. When you do move them, take care not to damage the bulb.

8. Are there any deer resistant spring flowering bulbs?

Believe it or not there are a few plants that deer tend to pass by. Daffodils, allium, crocus, chinodoxa, scilla, grape hyacinths and snow drops are all supposed to be deer resistant. But if deer get hungry enough, they'll eat anything.

9. What recommendations can you make in addition to the standard tulips and daffodils?

Tulips and daffodils are popular for a reason...they are great performers! But there are many other fall planted bulbs that perform very well here in east Idaho. One is the Giant Allium. This striking member of the onion family has large, ball-shaped blooms comprised of purple star-shaped florets. Because of their flower size (5"), and height (4') Giant Allium is a real head-turner.

10. What bulbs are good for forcing to enjoy indoors?

The easiest spring flowering bulbs for forcing are amaryllis, paperwhites, hyacinths, muscari and large flowering crocus. Other bulbs that can be forced but may require a little more attention are tulips, and miniature daffodils.

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