

Spring/Fall Bulbs

BULBS

Bulbs are useful for a number of purposes. Many supply excellent cut flowers. They are used in formal landscapes, for border planting, rock gardens naturalizing areas, blending with annuals and perennials and for indoor forcing. Buy large, firm, plump and fairly hard bulbs. Avoid flaky, soft and moldy defects. Stay away from bargain bulbs. Purchases should be made at a reputable garden centre and bulbs should be planted as soon as they become available.

SUMMER BULBS

Summer bulbs emerge in spring and bloom in summer. Most come from warm-weather areas and don't like freezing temperatures.

Like spring-blooming bulbs, it's helpful to cut off the plants' flowers as they fade. In many species, this will encourage the plants to keep blooming. (Lilies are an exception -- these summer bulbs bloom only once a year.)

If you live in a cold-winter climate, you'll probably need to dig the bulbs right around your first fall frost and store them in a cool (around 50F) place for the winter.

Many summer-flowering bulbs enjoy rich soil so it can be helpful to fertilize them with a general-purpose garden fertilizer. Be sure to follow the directions on the fertilizer package to avoid damaging your plants with too much food.

SPRING BULBS

Spring bulbs are best planted in the fall before the ground freezes. This gives the plant a chance to build roots before winter.

Most spring bulbs emerge and bloom in spring -- then their foliage starts to fade and they go dormant by midsummer.

It's important to let the foliage naturally go yellow -- don't cut it off early and don't braid the foliage to try to make it look tidier. Instead, plant colorful annuals or perennials in front of your bulbs to hide the foliage from sight.

It is helpful to remove the flowers on most spring bulbs as soon as they start to fade. Otherwise your bulbs will put their energy into producing seed instead of a big crop of blooms the following year. It's typically not necessary to fertilize spring blooming bulbs, especially if you have average or rich soil. But if you do wish to feed your spring bulbs, feed them at planting time or just as they begin to emerge in spring.



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BULB CARE + TIPS

Water your bulbs in well after you plant them. Then spread a layer of mulch over the soil to disguise your planting holes -- this can discourage critters such as squirrels from digging up your bulbs.

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Many spring-flowering bulbs are native to hot, dry areas -- so they prefer dry conditions in summer, when they're dormant.

Summer bulbs, on the other hand, emerge in spring and bloom in summer. Most come from warm-weather areas and don't like freezing temperatures. Like spring-blooming bulbs, it's helpful to cut off the plants' flowers as they fade. In many species, this will encourage the plants to keep blooming. (Lilies are an exception -- these summer bulbs bloom only once a year.)

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