

Fall Bulb Care

It is now fall, and time to think about spring. I know that seems like it doesn't make sense, but September and October are the months to plant your spring blooming bulbs. Now is also the time to start digging up and storing your summer blooming bulbs for the season, prior to a hard freeze.

There are a lot of plant choices you have when planting spring blooming bulbs. You can plant tulips, daffodils, crocus, hyacinth, allium, grape hyacinth, and scilla. Any of these would be a good choice for a wonderful spring landscape, but you may want to plant these among summer and fall blooming plants to increase the display and make it last all year, plus many of these plants bloom early and then go dormant for the year. Remember though, the tulips and daffodils keep their leaves throughout the summer to help build their flowers for next year, so don't cut those back until the leaves turn brown.

When planting bulbs, it is best to buy them when you are going to use them to ensure they are in good condition to be planted. Make sure that the bulbs you purchase are not molding or soft in the bags when you buy them. Plant the bulbs 2-3 times as deep as the bulb is tall, and space the bulb's diameter apart. Make sure you plant bulbs with the pointy end or the eyes facing up in the soil.

We also need to think about our summer blooming bulbs at this time of the year. The summer blooming bulbs includes gladiolus, cannas, begonias, caladium, elephant ear and dahlia. Many summer blooming bulbs need to be dug up in the fall and stored indoors over the winter. These bulbs need to be dug up prior to a hard frost. If they are still in the ground and we get a light frost, they should be fine as long as they are removed shortly after that. It is ok if the foliage gets damaged in a light frost, as long as the bulb is not damaged it can be replanted next spring.

Once the bulbs are removed from the ground, they need to be stored properly to survive the winter. Remove the foliage from the bulbs, shake off any excess soil and hose them off to clean up the bulbs. Then you need to cure them, or dry them, for 2-3 weeks with most of the summer bulbs. Then place the bulbs in crates or boxes, allowing for air flow. Store them throughout the winter in a cool, dark location such as a basement. Check the bulbs periodically through the winter to ensure no bulbs are starting to rot or mold. If any do start to rot or mold, discard them immediately.

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