



Planting Spring-Blooming Bulbs

I make no secret of the fact that bulbs, especially those that bloom in the spring, are one of my favorite types of plants. Not only are they incredibly low-maintenance, they are extremely cost efficient and offer color in the garden at a time when not many other plants can. Here are a few things to keep in mind when incorporating bulbs to your landscape.

First, always buy and plant bulbs when they are in season. I never plant spring-blooming bulbs until the temperature has cooled, and there has been at least one hard, killing frost. If it's too warm, you run the risk of your bulbs breaking out of dormancy – you do not want your bulbs to be sending out shoots just as the ground starts to freeze! Always buy bulbs at the appropriate time – spring-blooming bulbs in the fall, and summer-blooming bulbs in the spring.

Second, make sure when you plant bulbs that you're planting ones that are able to withstand Nebraska winters. Some of the best for this area and our soil types are tulips, daffodils, crocus, allium, and hyacinth. Look below for a few of my absolute favorites. There are other, less common bulbs that I also recommend – Camassia, Fritillaria, and Chionodoxa. All of these offer different colors, sizes and shapes that together can give your landscape depth and interest just where you need it.

Third, always plant your bulbs at the proper depth. A good rule of thumb is plant three times as deep as the bulb is long. For example, if you have a daffodil bulb that is 2 inches long, plant it 6 inches deep. Many people are concerned at knowing which end of the bulb points up. Look at the bulb, and decide if there is a 'pointy' end, or a side with 'eyes.' If so, that's the end that faces up. If you can't tell, don't worry too much – the bulb will always right itself once it starts to grow. It just might take a little longer for it to break through the soil and flower.

After you plant the bulbs, water them in well. They won't really need water after that until the spring when they send their shoots up. Fertilize sparingly, if at all. Don't use a fertilizer with a high nitrogen content, or it will just result in a lot of foliage, and few and small flowers. A low-dose fertilizer such as 5-10-10 would be ideal.

Some of my favorite bulbs that I've had great success with include the following:
Tulips – 'Apeldoorn,' 'Marilyn,' 'Kingsblood,' 'West Point'
Daffodils – 'Las Vegas,' 'Mount Hood,' 'Chromacolor,' 'Ice Follies'
Alliums – 'Gladiator,' 'Globemaster,' *Allium karatavense*
Crocus – 'Pictus,' 'Ruby Giant,' 'Golden Yellow'
Fritillaria – *Fritillaria meleagris*, *Fritillaria imperialis* 'Lutea Maxima,' *Fritillaria imperialis* 'Rubra Maxima'

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