

## PLANTING NATIVE BULBS & CORMS

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Flower bulbs do everything in response to soil temperature, sunlight and air temperature. They should be planted in the fall after the temperature of the ground has cooled down significantly, preferably below 55 degrees, so they develop a good root system. If bulbs are planted too early when the soil is still warm, they may get confused and put out top growth which will diminish spring blooms. Chill your bulbs in the refrigerator (not the freezer) in a paper bag until you are ready to plant them. Don't store bulbs in plastic.

Make sure you select a planting site with appropriate sunlight and good water drainage. Bulbs hate "wet feet" and won't grow in an area with poor drainage. For clay soil, break up the clay about a foot deeper than the planting depth of your flower bulbs and amend the bed with a neutral pH organic matter. If planting in sandy soil, add neutral organic matter as well. Never add horse manure, chicken droppings or other "hot" manure or compost to your flower bulb beds.

Plant your bulbs once the weather is consistently cool. Dig 2–3 inches below the prescribed planting depth to loosen the soil. Place the bulb firmly in the soil with the pointed end up, taking care not to break off any sprout growth. [If you can't tell which end is the pointed one—often an issue with little corms, plant it on its side.] Cover with 3–4 inches of soil. Do not mix fertilizer into the hole. Do not use plain bone meal as it is nutritionally incomplete and can attract animals. You can lightly broadcast bulb food over the surface of the ground once you have covered up all the bulbs. Water your beds occasionally if there is a prolonged dry spell in the fall. Cover with about 2 inches of mulch if desired, but remove it in the spring as soon as flower shoots appear.

As a rule, bulbs don't thrive when planted in window boxes or patio containers. If not protected by the proper depth of soil on all sides, they tend to be subjected to temperature spiking as a result, which yields poor root development. Bulbs need a consistent cold temperature over the winter in order to develop a mature root system.

Bulbs are best left to multiply in the ground. Cut the dead flower stalks off but leave the foliage until it dies back naturally, and cut off summer water once it does. Bulbs should be divided once flowering has diminished, usually every 8 to 10 years.