



FALL BULBS



INSECTS & DISEASES

Very few insects or diseases bother spring flowering bulbs. Rodents, squirrels and small mammals are their worst culprits. You may need to place a wire mesh over the bulb bed at planting to keep digging pests out.

Bulb rot is not uncommon in our tight clay soils. Make sure to amend the soil with plenty of organic matter at the time of planting to help break up the clay.

WATER REQUIREMENTS

Water your bulbs well right after planting. Then water as needed during dry spells and flowering. Remember your bulb's roots are underground and too much water will cause root rot to set in.

HARVESTING

If you would like to cut your flowers for a vase, keep in mind that their life is relatively short compared to other cut flowers. For longer life, cut tulips when their bud is showing color but is still closed.

Cut daffodils and hyacinths when buds start opening. Daffodils should not be put in a vase with any other flowers within the first 24 hours of cutting. They produce a sap which is toxic to other flowers, especially tulips. After the 24 hours you can mix daffodils with other flowers.

After the remaining blooms have faded and started browning remove the flower stalk down to the ground. Doing this prevents seed production which directs energy towards making seeds instead of directing energy down to enlarge the bulb for next year.

One important tip to remember at this stage is to leave the foliage in place until it has turned yellow or brown. Resist the temptation to cut all the leaves out of the bed as soon as flowering is over. This may prove unsightly so try to plant your bulbs in an area that soon gets hidden by other upcoming shrubs or perennials.

VARIETIES

Fall bulbs include tulips, hyacinths, daffodils, allium, crocus, snowdrops, grape hyacinths and lycoris (aka belladonna lily, naked ladies and surprise lillies).

When choosing your bulbs remember the larger the bulb size the more vigorous your plant will be.

BLOOMTIME SEQUENCE OF BLOOMING:

Crocus and snowdrops (first)

Hyacinths and daffodils

Tulips

Allium

FERTILIZING

At the time of planting add superphosphate, bone meal or a specialized food formulated just for bulbs. Mix the fertilizer with soil that you would use for backfilling (don't put handfuls of fertilizer at the bottom of the hole and then place your bulb on top). Avoid high nitrogen fertilizers.

In subsequent years feed your bulbs after they are done blooming. This helps extend photosynthesis in remaining leaves which are sending energy down to the bulb preparing and making the underground bulb larger for next year.

If your flower production is declining over the years it may be a sign of under fertilizing or overcrowding. You may need to dig up your crowded bed, separate the bulbs and replant the largest ones. Do this after the leaves have all died back in late spring or early summer. Replant immediately or store bulbs in a cool dry place and plant them in the fall.

