

Peter Beales®

World Leaders in Classic Roses

The Basics of Bulb Planting



Bulb Planting

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Preparation

Fork the soil over well and mix in a slow release fertiliser such as bone meal or fish blood and bone when planting bulbs. Especially on heavy soils, dig in horticultural grit and sand to prevent waterlogging, this can cause bulbs to rot.

Timing

September/October is the ideal time to plant Crocus, Lilies, Alliums and Hyacinths. Plant Tulips in November and more tender summer flowering bulbs like Gladioli in the spring. For the best spring display, plant Daffodils before the end of September.

Quality Control

When buying bulbs, reject any that are soft or showing signs of mould or discolouration. Ensure the outer scales are intact and not damaged or diseased. Large and firm bulbs will provide you with a good display of flowers. Small bulbs may not flower in their first year.

Planting

As a general rule, bulbs should be planted in holes around 3 times as deep as the bulb itself. Ensure they are planted at least their own width away from the next bulb.

Bulb/Tuber/Corm	Depth	Distance Between	When	Where
Allium	10cm	10cm	Autumn	FS
Begonia	1cm	30cm	Spring	FS/SS/DS
Bluebell	10cm	10cm	Spring/Autumn	DS
Crocus	10cm	7cm	Autumn	FS/SS
Daffodil	10cm	7cm	Autumn	FS
Dalia tubers	15cm	45cm	Spring	FS
Gladiolus corms	10cm	15cm	Spring	FS
Hyacinth	10cm	8cm	Autumn	FS/SS
Iris Reticulata	10cm	8cm	Autumn	FS
Lily	20cm	15cm	Autumn	FS/SS
Tree Lily	20cm	15cm	Autumn	FS/SS
Tulip	15cm	13cm	Autumn	FS
Snowdrops	10cm	10cm	Spring/Autumn	DS

KEY: FS Full Sun; SS Semi Shade; DS Dappled Shade

Positioning

Choose planting positions based on colour and flowering height to complement the surrounding area. Planting in groups of 6 or more is recommended for best effect. Bear in mind where the plants came from and what the natural environment for the particular bulb would be: For example Tulips originated in Turkey so will love a warm, sunny spot with excellent drainage.

In the Border

Use bulbs to add structure and height to a mixed border: Alliums, Gladioli, Eremurus, Fritillaria and Camassia are a few that work really well.

Mark the Spot

Be sure to mark where bulbs are planted with labels to prevent accidental lifting or damage when digging in future.

Bulbs in Pots

Bulbs in pots need good drainage so use plenty of broken crockery in the bottom of the pot and a layer of gravel. Bulb compost is readily available, or use a mixture of two parts John Innes No. 3 to one part horticultural grit: drainage is of utmost importance.

Combinations

Consider using different types of bulbs in the same position/pot to elongate the period of flowering. For example, layer Daffodils, Tulips and Crocus in a pot at their required depths: this is called 'triple planting' and can be very effective. Try teaming these with pansies or violas for a long period of colour.

Naturalising Bulbs

Many bulbs can be attractively naturalised as we do with many other flowers: varieties that are close to the original species are most suited for this purpose. Species Crocus or Narcissi Pheasant's eye planted at random in a grass make a lovely natural effect. Planting in grass can be done in individual holes or fold back the turf to enable access to the soil.

Potential Pests/Problems

Bulbs are a clever package containing all the nutrients and sugars required to flower, they can be quite tasty to squirrels or mice. Tulips can be affected by Tulip Fire – if so they must be removed and destroyed. Blindness (lack of flowering) in Daffodils can be caused by planting too close to the surface or the clump is producing lots of 'bulblets' and becoming overcrowded so need lifting and separating.

Lifting and Storage

After flowering, remove seed heads and wait for foliage to die back before lifting bulbs, clean and store them in boxes in a cool dry place to replant the following autumn. This applies to many but not all bulbs: Daffodils for example, can be left to overwinter in the ground. Be sure to leave the foliage until it dies off as this is taking in nutrients to store for the next flowering.





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