

Problem Shooting - Why do bulbs fail?

Too wet? Poor drainage and wet soil rots bulbs and roots. Try pots or raised beds.

Too dry? Water in dry spells to keep the soil moist.

Too shady? Most spring flowering bulbs prefer sun.

Too Warm? Some bulbs (e.g. tulips) won't flower without a minimum winter chilling period. However, they will flower in their first year if treated to a false winter chill. This may happen before you buy them, but you can make certain, and enhance the blooms, by chilling your tulip bulbs in the fridge for 8 to 10 weeks prior to planting.

Too cold? Warm climate bulbs, such as freesias, are frost tender. Try them in pots or plant in spring (after frosts) for summer flowering.

Too deep? Shoots may not find their way to the surface, or at best they may be short stemmed. Err on the shallow side as many bulbs have contractile roots and pull themselves down to the ideal depth. However tulip bulbs can benefit from slightly deeper planting in a warm climate.

Too shallow? Bulbs may dry out. The recommended depth is usually about twice the depth of the bulb.

Faulty bulbs? Don't plant bulbs that feel soft and squishy. These are infected with bulb fly or disease.

Burnt? Don't place fertiliser in direct contact with bulbs. This risks burning and rot.

When bulbs fail to flower the second year

End of season foliage removed too soon? As the foliage dies down after flowering it is storing energy in the bulb below, and initiating next year's blooms.

Bulbs rotted? Too much warmth and moisture (as may be the case in an irrigated flower bed) over summer may cause bulbs to rot. Lift and store them over summer.

Wrong climate? In a warm climate, many cold climate bulbs simply won't reproduce successfully. Regard them as annuals and buy fresh bulbs each autumn.

Making the most of

Spring Flowering Bulbs

