

Spring flowering bulbs are planted in autumn. Those from warm regions of the world, such as South African Freesias, Ixia, and Sparaxis, grow easily in our mild climates. Others, such as tulips and hyacinths, rely on a long, cold winter to flower. A 'false winter' chilling will see them flower in the first season whatever your climate.

What we call bulbs are rhizomes, corms, tubers or true bulbs, but all are self-contained flower embryos wrapped in a piece of specialised storage tissue that provides food for the flowers. That's why they are so easy to grow.



Bulbs in the garden

Most bulbs need sun. All need well-drained soil. Improve drainage by digging in lots of compost or planting in raised beds.

Even if you have only a few bulbs, they will make more of an impact if you plant them in close groupings rather than sporadically. Combine clumps of bulbs with spring flowering perennials and annuals, which will continue

flowering as the bulbs finish. If bulbs are expected to flower the following year, their foliage must be left to die down. If not, they can be removed once flowering has finished.

The woodland effect

Most bulbs prefer sun but some grow beautifully under deciduous trees, flowering before the tree fills its canopy. Typical woodland bulbs include snow flakes, bluebells, and many daffodils. 'Erlcheer' and 'Paper White' thrive in warm climates. If planting around trees it is especially important to enrich the soil with fertilizer and compost. When

growing daffodils in lawn, delay mowing until at least six weeks after flowering, otherwise you risk having no flowers the following year.



Lifting and storing

Bulbs are lifted in order to protect them from unfavourable conditions during their dormancy (such as irrigated summer soil) and to divide the clumps. Overcrowding inhibits flowering. Daffodils should be lifted and divided every few years. After the foliage has died down, loosen each clump and lift with a fork. Separate bulbs and discard any soft or damaged ones. Dry bulbs completely in trays before storing in net or paper bags in a cool airy shed. Some bulbs deteriorate to such an extent that it is not worth lifting them.

Making the most of

Spring Flowering Bulbs

There is nothing like a flourish of spring flowering bulbs to make us feel good as winter nears its end.



Grow bulbs in pots

Containers are a very practical way to grow bulbs, especially if your soil is wet in winter.

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