



Jerry Baker
America's Master Gardener®

**SPECIAL
REPORT**

BEAUTIFUL BULB BONANZA

AMAZING TIPS, TRICKS & TONICS!

BULB BASICS

It's a fact of life: to enjoy the glorious bulb flowers that bloom in spring — such as tulips, daffodils, hyacinths, crocus and others — you must plant them in the fall. Nothing is easier to plant than bulbs, and nothing gives you more spectacular rewards. Even the most unskilled gardener can create a breathtaking and beautiful spring garden. So let's find out how to do it.

What to Plant

With a little planning, it's possible to have flowers in bloom all spring long. Some Dutch bulbs, such as snowdrops, will bloom in March. Daffodils and hyacinths, on the other hand, will blossom from mid-April to early May. By planting different kinds of tulips, you can have flowers in the garden from March until June.

The Right Climate

Spring-flowering bulbs are planted in the fall because they require a sustained "dormant" period of cold temperatures to stimulate root development. As a rule, the colder your climate, the earlier you plant. In colder northern climates, for example, plant in September or October. In warmer climates, you may need to plant bulbs as late as December (or even later). The only universal rule is that spring-flowering bulbs must be planted before the first hard frost. Your local climate will also affect which bulbs you choose to plant. Not all bulbs have the same cold requirements. Ask your bulb supplier to recommend the flowering bulbs that do well in your area.

The Right Choices

Spring-flowering bulbs offer a wide variety of colors, heights and flowering periods. Since bulbs are easy to grow, let your imagination run wild. If you learn a bit about the characteristics of the flowers that will bloom, planning color schemes and blooming schedules is easy. Using pictures cut from mail-order catalogues or booklets picked up at your local garden center, you can plan your dream garden on paper right in your own living room!

Color, heights and flowering times are key to colorful and creative plantings around your home.

7 Can't Miss Tips for Beautiful Bulbs

- Note the blooming period for each bulb variety on its package, in its catalog listing or ask your supplier. Plant shorter, early-blooming bulbs among tall, late-season flowers. The late-bloomers will camouflage the withered foliage after the shorter flowers have faded.
- Bright-colored flowering bulbs bring life to a neutral setting; try them in the rock garden or alongside a brick wall.
- Plant low-growing bulbs at the front edges of garden beds so that they won't be hidden by shrubs and taller flowers.
- If your garden or window box is visible from indoors, try using colors that complement your interior curtains or porch decor.
- "Paint" colorful pictures with your plantings. Try mixing elegant "Apricot Beauty" tulips, for example with low-growing cobalt-blue grape hyacinths (muscari).
- Plant scattered clusters of early-flowering bulbs, such as crocus, throughout your lawn to achieve a "natural" look.
- Experiment. Pick a flower on a whim and try a small planting. If it does well for you, add more next year.

That's all there is to it! By following these simple guidelines, your garden can be the envy of the neighborhood. Basically it all boils down to: buy those bulbs, put them in the ground, and dream all winter long of the glorious spring that is just around the corner!

BULB KNOW-HOW

Fall is the time when you must plant bulbs if you want those dazzling displays of color next spring. So to get the low-down on the care and feeding of bulbs, I went straight to the source, the Netherlands. Here's what those fine folks had to say about their pride and joy:

I. Fall Planting

1. Can you tell how large the flower will be from the size of the bulb?

Usually, yes. For most types of bulbs, the size is directly related to the size of the flower. Some of the "Minor Bulbs" (the "Major Bulbs" are the tulips, daffodils, etc.) are tiny and the flowers are also tiny...perfect for grouping in a rock garden for instance.

2. Can bulbs be planted in an outdoor container?

Yes, if you store them indoors in winter, or if you live in a mild climate. Otherwise, hard frosts will kill bulbs planted in any container above ground.

3. Which bulbs can be planted together?

You can combine them to your heart's desire. Just don't hide smaller bulbs behind a clump of tall ones. And you'll probably want bulbs in each grouping to bloom at the same time. Whereas, you may want some groups of early and some of late bulbs in different parts of the yard to keep the show going throughout spring.

4. Can you plant bulbs in beds of ivy, pachysandra, myrtle and other ground covers?

Yes, since the roots of the bulbs are much further underground, they won't rob each other of food. What's more, the leaves of the ground cover will help to hide the fading leaves of the bulbs once they've finished blooming.

5. Can you combine bulbs with annuals?

Yes. The annuals will fill in when the bulbs have finished their colorful show. And for ideal planning, some annuals (pansies, forget-me-nots, wall-flowers) can be planted along with the bulbs in fall. Other annuals can easily be added next spring.

6. How do you get a naturalized landscape?

This refers to the naturalized look of bulbs in a "wild" setting...even if it's just a corner of your garden where it's difficult to get the lawnmower! Daffodils are especially attractive when naturalized, on a slope, in a meadow setting or wooded area. Large bulbs should always be planted in the company of other bulbs. And that is even more true of the smaller bulbs. Crocus, Snowdrops, Siberian squill, Winter aconite and lots of others are good for naturalizing. The best way to group them is to stand in one spot and toss a handful of pebbles on the ground.

Then plant a bulb where each pebble landed. Or walk around your garden and put the bulbs (at least 6) next to a large rock, beside a tree, or under some bushes.

7. What kind of soil is good for bulbs?

Bulbs will grow in any garden so long as there's good drainage.

8. What is the best way to prepare a bulb bed?

For an entire bed, the best way is to dig out an area to about 10". Fill in the first couple of inches with sand and peatmoss for good drainage, then work in bone meal-an excellent nutrient for bulbs-and finally, lay your bulbs out on top in the pattern you want. Then just fill in with the original soil and water thoroughly. If you don't want to dig out an entire bed, there are special tools for easy bulb planting...or you can use your garden trowel.

9. Is it better to dig individual holes for each bulb or to dig out an entire bed?

That depends on the effect you want. So long as the hole is deep enough, either method can be used.

10. Should fertilizer be added in fall?

Yes, if you want to have better flowerbulbs for many years. But be careful to use a 'slow release' one such as bone meal, special bulbfood or 8-8-8 fertilizer. Do not use 'quick release' fertilizers or fresh manure.

11. How can drainage be improved?

Poor drainage usually means too much clay in the soil. A good way to improve your soil is to work in sand, peat moss or compost to a depth of 1-1/2', well below the bulb planting depth.

12. What is the minimum number of bulbs needed to make a good showing?

10 or 12 tulips will look far better in a group than 6 or 7. For hyacinths, you need 6 to 8 to make a good showing. With daffodils, you should also have 10 to 12. And when it comes to the tiny bulbs, plant 20 to 100 to get a beautiful carpet of color.

13. Do you have to water bulbs after you plant them?

Yes. This is the single most important step to insuring good bloom. Bulbs begin immediately to form their roots. So you should give them plenty of water, especially if the soil is dry or in a dry period.

14. Do bulbs have to be mulched?

Covering the ground with a mulch of leaves or straw is usually not necessary for bulbs. If winters are really severe, however, a mulch from 2 to 5" will keep the ground around them from heaving. And in the South, a 2" layer will keep a more even ground temperature all year round.

15. Do bulbs bloom for more than one year?

Some bulbs will become so at home in your garden that they'll become 'naturalized citizens'. Others will last for several years if you just take a few basic steps (such as cutting off the flowers after bloom and leaving the foliage to die down naturally).

16. Can bulbs flower indoors?

Many bulbs can easily be 'forced' for winter blooming. And there are several types specifically meant to bring color and aroma into dreary winter rooms. The easiest of these are the Paperwhite Narcissus and the Amaryllis (*Hippeastrum*).

Some other varieties, such as hyacinths, tulips, other kinds of narcissus, crocus, etc. must have a cold period of 12 to 15 weeks. In this period, they need plenty of water. Put the bulbs, in their pots, into storage somewhere where the temperature will stay between 40° and 50°F or bury them outdoors (don't let them freeze!) And bring them indoors for flowering.

II. Springtime Care

1. When should bulbs be fertilized?

You already know to fertilize when planting, but bulbs need food as well when they're in active growth. This means that when the first shoots appear in spring, you should feed your bulbs an all-round fertilizer. This feeding will, at the same time, rebuild the bulb for next year's flowering. Fertilizers help guarantee years of pleasure from your bulbs.

2. Do bulbs need water in spring?

Yes, unless you have a very wet spring. Bulbs don't like wet feet.

3. How long should the flowers remain on the stem?

Don't let your bulbs begin to form seed pods...this drains the bulb of the energy it should be storing up for next year's blooms. Cut the flowers off after fading, but leave the foliage and stems.

4. Can bulb foliage be cut off when the flowers fade?

The bulb needs its leaves to rebuild for next year's growth. Therefore, you should leave it until it dies down naturally.

5. Can bulbs be moved immediately after flowering?

Again, if the dying foliage disturbs you, you can lift the bulb with a good ball of soil around its roots and put it immediately in another part of the garden...perhaps behind the vegetable patch. Plant at the same depth and water well, so that it continues its development.

6. Do you have to dig up bulbs and store them over the summer?

No. In fact, it's better to leave bulbs in the ground. At least until they become overcrowded. At that time, it's better to replant the entire bed. If you do decide to lift them, you must store them in dry, cool conditions or they will die.

7. When should you lift bulbs for storage?

When all the foliage is dried out, you can separate it easily from the bulb. Remove any dirt and store the bulb until fall in a dry and well-ventilated place.

III. Cold Climate Care

1. Can sprouting bulbs be damaged by extreme cold or snow?

Generally speaking, Mother Nature won't let a bulb send up sprouts until the chance of cold damage is past. A short freeze won't do lasting damage.

2. If bulbs begin to sprout in December/January, should they be mulched?

No. Leave them alone, and they'll take care of themselves.

3. Will the time of blooming be affected by a very early warm spell?

Some of the bulbs may bloom out of sequence, and you may get more flowers at one time than you'd planned.

4. Can the leaves that develop in fall be damaged by snow and freezing cold?

No. This is natural with some of the 'Minor Bulbs'. The foliage has a natural insulation.

V. Down South

1. Can you get bulbs to bloom in very warm climates?

Yes, but they require different handling. The early ones will still bloom early, the late will bloom late. But the blooming will begin much earlier than in the North. And planting time should be much later...when the ground has cooled off. This is usually a month or two later than in cold climates. Actually, bulbs need a period of very cold weather to be at their best and you can duplicate this by putting them in the bottom of the refrigerator (never in the freezer) for about 2 months before you plant them. Ripening fruit emits ethylene, a gas that will damage any flower bulb, so never store your bulbs together with fresh fruit.

2. Will the 'Minor Bulbs' do well?

Yes. And in the South, you can set out bulbs such as freesia, anemones, ranunculi, Paperwhite narcissus and amaryllis...and leave them in the ground over the winter, which you could not do in a cold climate.

3. Will hyacinths do well in the South?

Yes. Hyacinths do better than most since they are a warm-climate bulb. Some of the best hyacinths in the country are grown in and around New Orleans.

WHERE TO PLANT BULBS

Colorful spring-flowering bulbs can be planted anywhere in your garden, in sun or shade, along borders or terraces, or around a fence or tree. Some bulbs, such as daffodils, look lovely scattered at random.

For the most dramatic effect, plant tulips, daffodils and hyacinths in clusters of 10 or more bulbs, all of the same variety. Use a more lavish hand with the smaller bulbs, planting them in close groupings of 25 or more. Remember, the bigger the bulbs, the less you'll need for a spectacular showing of color next spring.

COME BACK LITTLE TULIPS!

After a long winter, tulips, daffodils and other early blooming bulb flowers make the long wait for spring seem worthwhile.

But once the season's bloom has gone, the yellowing foliage of spent bulb flowers can be a real eyesore. Worse, it seems to take forever to finally wither up and disappear.

What to do? Just leave it be — if you want your flowers to come back to bloom again next year.

The leaves of tulips, daffodils and other bulb flowers are working hard during the die-back period. This is when leaves absorb nutrients from the sun through photosynthesis to "recharge" the bulb with "food" for next year's growth and bloom season.

Fight the urge to trim back the dying leaves. Camouflage is the answer. Plant bulbs amidst bushy early growing perennials that will grow up and over dying bulb foliage. Or anchor down the yellowing leaves with a piece of wire bent into the shape of a hairpin. Don't braid or twist leaves into knots because this will interfere with leaf exposure to sunlight and reduce the photosynthesis process.

To further energize bulbs and boost repeat performance, apply a fast-release, high nitrogen fertilizer to bulb beds in early spring, just as bulb shoots come up.

CUT TULIPS APLENTY

As spring approaches, tulips come to mind. Soon they'll bloom in gardens. But why wait? Late winter is the peak season for cut tulips, with abundant supplies available fresh daily in the flower stalls of American florists and supermarkets coast-to-coast.

Proper Preparation

Properly kept, cut tulips will easily provide a week or more of jaunty color in your home. Here are a few tricks of the tulip trade to ensure maximum performance, endurance and beauty from cut tulips and other spring flowers:

- Be gentle with your flowers, keep them cool and protected on the way home.
- "Prepping" tulips prior to arranging them in vases will dramatically improve their appearance and performance. A constant supply of fresh, cool water is the secret.
- First, trim the white end off the tulip stem with a clean sharp knife or shears to open up water intake channels which close down when the stem is dry.
- Wrap the bunch snugly (to hold an upright position) in newspaper or paper, leaving the lower stems exposed.
- Position the wrapped bunch upright in a container of cool to lukewarm water just deep enough to cover the exposed stem bases but not touch the paper.
- Place the container in a cool location, and leave for an hour or two. This process allows the stems to draw up the fresh water and "stiffen" in a strong, upright stance. (If after several days the flowers begin to droop, simply repeat this prepping or stiffening procedure.)

Arranging Tulips

- In the vase, use only clean cool water to retard bacteria growth.
- Fill the vase only 1/3 full (the amount should be sufficient for the tulips to "drink" in a day); refill daily to that level.

- When arranging tulips, position the outer tulips with their lowest primary leaves draped gracefully outward.
- If you wish to mix daffodils in bouquets with tulips, you must "prep" the daffodils separately as daffodil stems release a sap-like substance that harms other flowers. Discard the daffodil prepping water and do not re-cut their stems.
- When arranging, remember that cut tulips continue to grow in water, sometimes adding nearly an inch of height in the vase; Darwin hybrids grow the most!
- For longer vase life, place bouquets out of direct sunlight or heat, add cut flower plant food to the water, keep the water fresh, and re-prepare if needed.
- After a week or so, give a fading bouquet a "second life" by removing it from the first vase, and rearranging the flowers that are still fresh in a second, smaller vase. Discard wilted flowers.

COLD WON'T NIP BUDS

Can spring's drastic temperature swings hurt the emerging shoots of crocus, daffodils, and tulips that were planted last fall? Generally not, since healthy spring-flowering bulbs will usually withstand extreme cold, snow or early warm spells.

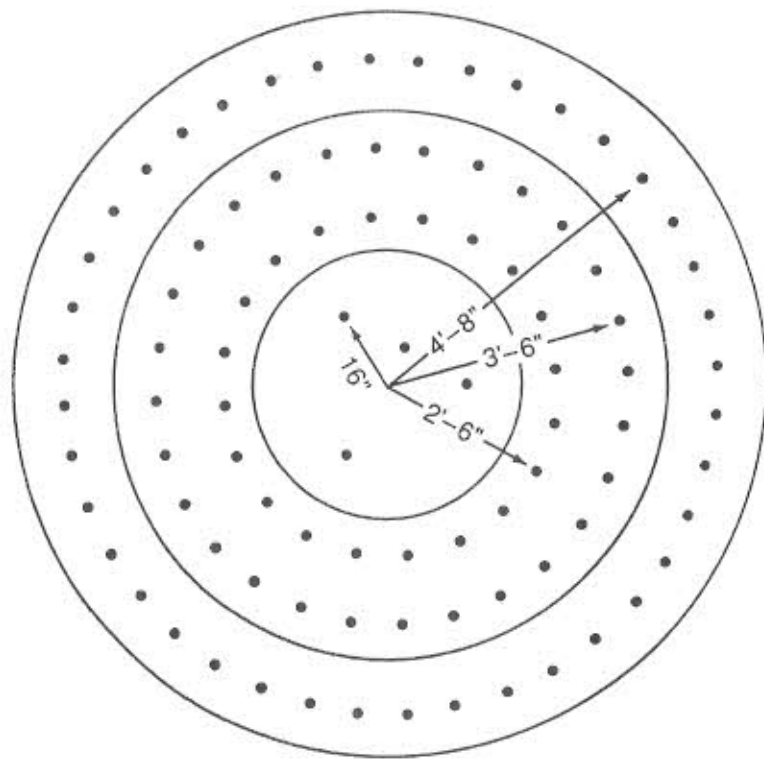
When the weather turns, don't bother dashing outside to cover early-sprouting bulbs with extra "weather protection". Adding additional mulch or coverings will only cause more gardening work. A short freeze won't do lasting damage to young bulb shoots and buds, though it may "burn" already open blossoms. Many, such as snowdrops, crocuses and early rock garden narcissi, are supposed to come up in very early spring, even peeking through the snow. Mother Nature has provided them with the means to survive.

An unseasonably warm spell may cause some bulbs to bloom earlier than anticipated, but in most cases, this won't result in damage.

FANTASTIC FLOWER BEDS

Remember that old fashioned circular bed of flowers that your grandma used to have out back? Well, just as all things old are new again, these too are coming back into fashion. For a refreshing burst of color in the middle of your yard, why not plant one of these beds? Once the annuals are done, you can plant tulips in it in the fall for a glorious display next spring.

The diameter of the bed is 10' 6", planned for full sun. For the best effect, grade the center of the bed 10" above the perimeter with a slight dome-shape. Also, use 6" of topsoil, and add bonemeal when planting.



FANTASTIC FLOWER BEDS

	ANNUAL DESIGN #1	ANNUAL DESIGN #2	ANNUAL DESIGN #3	ANNUAL DESIGN #4
Outer Ring 15" wide	36 Dusty Miller	50 Alyssum Little Gem	36 Alyssum Royal Carpet	36 Marigold Lemon Drop
Middle Ring 24" wide	43 Salvia, tall Bonfire	Fill to Center with	50 Marigold Snowboat	48 Salvia Firebrand
Center 48" wide	3 Cosmo Crimson Spire	56 Geranium pink	15 Basil Black Opal	15 Coleus Marble

	TULIP DESIGN #1 (EARLY)	TULIP DESIGN #2 (EARLY)	TULIP DESIGN #3 (LATE)	TULIP DESIGN #4 (LATE)
Outer Ring 15" wide	None	60 Moss Phlox - Soft Blue	None	120 Forget-Me-Not
Middle Ring 24" wide	150 double Mr. Vanderhoef	150 Single Sunburst	150 Darwin Golden Age	150 Darwin Bartigon
Center 48" wide	50 Electra	Sheared Globe Yew	50 Darwin The Bishop	50 Peony Fl'd. Ml. Taco

FORCING BULBS FOR INDOOR BEAUTY

While ol' Mother Nature is busying herself in late fall with the business of falling leaves and frosty mornings, you can be indoors getting a head start on bulbs that don't usually bloom until spring—crocus, galanthus, hyacinths, narcissus, scilla and tulip. Ask your local nurseryman or check your catalogs to determine which varieties are best for forcing.

There are two steps in forcing bulbs. With the first, the bulbs develop buds and roots; with the second, they flower.

The First Phase

This begins in October or November. Plant the bulbs in pots, keeping them at a temperature of 40°F for 2 to 3 months. During this phase, you can keep the potted bulbs outdoors or in a cold room indoors. If you keep them indoors, the room must be dark and the temperature kept at 40°F. Water the bulbs every day so the soil doesn't dry out.

The Second Phase

This begins in mid-January, after shoots have appeared. When the shoots are well out of the necks of the bulbs, bring the pots into a cool, bright room that can be kept at 55°F. Expect blooms in about a month.

You can refrigerate crocus, hyacinth, narcissus, and tulip bulbs at 40°F for 2 months instead of planting them in pots. At the end of the 2 months, plant them in bowls, and start them on the second phase of development.

A word of caution: once bulbs have been forced, don't try to store them for replanting in your garden as you would outdoor-flowering bulbs. It just won't work.



For more information on Jerry Baker's amazing lawn and garden tips, tricks and tonics using common, everyday products, please write to The YardenCare Company, P.O. Box 6047, Wixom, MI 48393 or call (810) 960-3993.

TIMELY TONICS

1. To get your bulbs, tubers and corms off to a great start, before planting, soak them in a mixture of: 2 tbsp. Yarden Activator™, 1 tsp. Yarden Shampoo™, and 1/4 tsp. Instant Tea granules added to 2 gallons of warm water.
2. To prepare your beds for planting bulbs, 7 to 10 days before planting, overspray the soil with a mixture of 1 cup Yarden Activator and 1/2 cup Yarden Shampoo in your 20 gallon hose end sprayer, filling the balance of the jar with warm water.
3. When planting bulbs, pack them an organic lunch that'll keep them from getting hungry in the winter. For bed plantings, mix:

**10 lbs. dry manure or compost,
5 lbs. bone meal, and
2 lbs. Epsom salts**

per 100 sq. ft. (10' x 10') of soil. Then overspray with Yarden Activator or my All Season Green-Up Tonic. And don't throw out your fireplace ashes—add up to 15 lbs. per 100 sq. ft. to your bulb beds. They supply potassium which helps develop strong stems and fat, firm bulbs.

4. To revitalize the soil in your flower beds, after fall clean-up, overspray with a mixture of: 1 cup yarden Activator and 1 cup Yarden Shampoo in your 20 gallon hose-end sprayer, filling the balance of the sprayer jar with warm water.
5. To put your flower beds to sleep for winter, cover them with finely mowed grass clippings and leaves, and overspray this debris with Thatch Buster™. Then 7 to 10 days later, lightly spade this material into the soil, and then let set until spring.