

Forget Me Not
Publications

TULIPS, DAFFODILS

and Other Spring Flowering Bulbs

The First
Step to
Planting
Bulbs

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Introduction



Many of us, if not all of us, have often heard and even repeated the verse "April Showers bring May Flowers" and it is a true statement. The poet William Wordsworth also helps the reader long for spring by creating an image of graceful daffodils dancing through the readers mind with words.

Daffodils

*When all at once I saw a crowd,
A host, of golden daffodils;
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.*

*Ten thousand saw I at a glance,
Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.
And then my heart with pleasure fills,
And dances with the daffodils.*

William Wordsworth (1770-1850)

I would someday love to travel to the Netherlands and tip toe through the tulips and walk along **The River of Muscari at Keukenhof Gardens**. But until that time, I have to enjoy the spring flowers in my own yard and local gardens or even looking at pictures of those famous gardens so far away.

As I peruse the bulb and seed catalogs and even meander through store aisles letting my mind wander, I know I want to plant all of the bulbs I see. I get brought back to reality when my wife asks when and where am I going to plant them all. Even though she likes the idea of tulips and daffodils blooming all around the yard, she wonders if our landscape will ever be done. To me, a landscape is always evolving especially when bulbs are involved. One must know it is all about planting the right bulb in the right spot to bloom at the right time.

What is the right bulb and the right spot to plant it in? When I worked in the garden center it would always surprise me how many young gardeners became disappointed when learning that many of the blooming flowers of April and May needed to be planted in the previous fall months. So hopefully with this book, I can help you find your own way of tip toeing through the Tulips, Daffodils and Other Spring Flowering Bulbs.

Chapter 1: Fall Bulbs Grow Spring Flowers



One of my favorite seasons of the year is spring. As the snow melts and the earth begins to wake from her long winter nap, there are many simple beauties that start to spring forth. Early blooming flowers are truly a sure sign of spring.

As the ground starts to thaw, some of the most daintiest flowers start to peek their heads upwards reaching for the warming rays of the spring sun. Some of the earliest blooming bulbs flowers are of the Cyclamen Daffodils varieties called **February Gold** and **Peeping Tom**. **Galanthus Snowdrops** and early **Crocus** also have a very early showing. Some of these will even bloom up through the snows of late February and early March.

You will start seeing spring flowering bulbs and rhizomes start showing up in retail stores usually mid August with the largest selections coming available after the Labor Day holiday. However, one of the most important things to remember when purchasing bulbs, is that some of the bargain pricing you will see might reflect the quality of what you are getting.

Iris rhizomes should be planted as early as possible--mid to late August is best. However, other flowering bulbs and corms can be planted as long as the ground is workable and if you plant into November, give your bulbs a mulch covering to protect them through their first winter.

Chapter 2: Is It A Bulb Or Another Name?



Photo provided by Netherland Bulb Company

Have you ever been corrected when talking about flowering bulbs, and found out it doesn't always mean you are talking about the right kind of flowering bulbs? Does it really make a difference when talking about bulbs that you use the correct terminology? Depending on who you are talking with, it can be a big deal. However, generally speaking, a bulb is often referred to the bulbous plant part which is planted in the ground that will then grow into a flower or vegetable. Not to worry, I won't test you at the end of the book to see if you remember the differences. However, just to let you know what exactly the differences are I have included their descriptions.

Understanding the difference of what you are planting:

Bulb: A true bulb is formed from fleshy stems and leaves and will often grow concentric rings of scales. These scales attach at the bottom of the bulb forming a small disk called the basal plate, which is a compressed stem. Roots grow from the basal plate helping the bulb secure itself in the ground and to absorb water and nutrients to sustain life for the growing flower. The scale like

leaf layers store food and energy surrounding a bud that will become next year's flower. An outer scale will often dry and create a protective layer or tunic for the bulb. This tunic will usually start to break off or separate from the bulb when the bulbs are dug for selling. Examples of bulbs are **daffodil, lily, tulip**, and some **irises**.

Corm: A corm is an underground storage organ formed at the base of the new emerging stem. New corms are formed each year. A corm does not have separate scale like a bulb, but is a mass of tissue. They too have a dry protective outer layer that is stringy in nature. As a stem grows from the corm, buds will start to form at the stem base. Smaller buds can also grow on the outside of the corm. As the flowering stems starts to wither and die at the end of the season, a dominant new bud will emerge and develop for next year's flowers. Examples of corms are **crocus, colchicum, freesia**, and **gladiolus**.

Rhizome: A rhizome is an underground stem of swollen tissue that will grow roots and leaves. A rhizome grows in a general horizontal pattern and roots will emerge on the underside. Leaves and flowers will sprout from the topside. Buds can form at intervals, usually creating segments along the rhizome structure. When separated, these segmented buds can support new growth. Examples of rhizomes are **canna lily, calla lily**, and some **irises**.

Tuber: Think of a potato. A tuber is a fleshy storage organ growing from a stem or root of a plant. It will develop "eyes" or buds all over its surface. Emerging shoots will then grow upward from these eyes or buds to form plants above ground. Many tubers can be divided to form new plants as long as there are healthy eyes on the divided tissue. Examples of tubers are **cyclamen, dahlia**, and **tuberous begonia**.