



Bulbs, Bulbs, Bulbs!

Planting Spring Blooming Bulbs

In the early spring, beautiful displays of tulips and daffodils will sprinkle landscapes around town. These and other bulbs provide bright spots of color in the chilly gray months that often make up a Flagstaff spring. Spring bulbs are a fantastic option for Flagstaff because they need the cold weather of winter to get ready to bloom, and they do not mind frost or even some snow once they start to bloom in the spring. Besides, when it comes to bang-for-your-buck, you cannot beat bulbs that cost less than a dollar and get bigger and produce more blooms in years to come.

When bulbs start to bloom around town in March or April, many gardeners come in wishing for the same brightness and color in their own spring landscapes. Unfortunately, the glory of spring bulbs cannot be added in the spring; it has to be planted now. Here in Flagstaff, late September or October is the perfect time to plant spring bulbs for optimum spring color. The cool night temperatures prevent the bulbs from rotting and the winter to come guarantees the necessary chill hours for bulbs to produce fabulous displays of color. So, what needs to be done to give spring bulbs the ultimate boost and ready them for the best spring color display?

Planting

Spring blooming bulbs need well-drained soil and at least partial sun to bloom at their best. If you live in an area of Flagstaff where clay is prevalent, amend your soil with **Gypsum Soil Magic** and add **Warner's Planting Mix** to improve soil texture and drainage. Amend the soil to a depth of 12 inches to create a loose, well-drained soil texture. When planting, place the bulb facing upward in a hole about three times as deep as the bulb is tall. This means that large bulbs like tulips or daffodils will be planted about 8 inches deep while smaller bulbs will be planted about 4 inches deep, measured from the bottom of the bulb. *The top of the bulb is the pointed side, called the nose, and the flat side is the bottom, referred to as the root plate.*

Fertilize

Your Spring blooming bulbs will need to be fertilized when planted with **Bone Meal or Super Phosphate**. These products are high in phosphorous. Either one can be added to the bottom of the hole and mixed with a small scoop of mulch before placing the bulb and filling up the hole. Top dressing with fertilizer after planting will not have the same positive effects.

Sprinkle a tiny bit of **Blood Meal** in the bottom of each hole and around the

finished top area to ward off pesky animals looking to make a treat out of freshly planted bulbs.

Watering

Give your newly planted bulbs a good soaking right after planting. Other than that, as long as we receive at least two inches of snow every ten days, your bulbs won't need additional watering through the winter.

In the Spring, when shoots appear, start watering bulbs about once a week, providing a deep soaking rather than shallow sprinkling. Take care not to over-water as this promotes bulb rot.

Spring Fertilizing

As soon as you see growth on your bulbs in the Spring, fertilize the area with **Gardener's Special** monthly until the bulbs flower. After the bulbs begin to flower, stop and enjoy the show.

Maintenance

After your bulbs flower, you are left with the leaves which many consider messy and unattractive. These should not be cut off. The leaves are necessary for the plant to photosynthesize and produce energy that will be stored in the bulb for the next year's flower show.

One easy solution to hiding the mess is to layer planting beds so that the remaining bulb foliage is hidden by emerging spring perennials. Another solution is to trim back the flower stems and leave the foliage as a green accent. Once that foliage has turned yellow or brown and died back, it can be removed.

Our days are still warm and it is still a great time to be outside. Enjoy the weather and add a beautiful spring accent to your garden by planting bulbs such as tulips, daffodils, crocus and iris. You will be glad you did next spring when you are able to enjoy your amazing display of spring color!