



Fall Bulb Planting

Most bulbs prefer rich soil that drains well. Adding compost (or well-composted manure) will improve the aeration, nutrient-holding capacity, drainage, and water-retention of most soils. If you are planting a large area, spread 2-3 inches of compost over the entire area to be planted. Sprinkle 1 to 1 ½ cups of complete bulb fertilizer per 10 square feet. Thoroughly mix them into the soil to a depth of about 9 inches and plant your bulbs in this amended soil. If you are planting individual bulbs, mix a tablespoon of bulb fertilizer into your hole before planting. Many bulbs also do well in containers, in good well-drained potting soil.

The majority of bulbs like wind protection and full sun. A few bulbs prefer shade to sun, and some late-blooming daffodils and tulips will last longer if planted in light shade. Sun-loving spring bulbs will also often thrive under deciduous trees that leaf out after their bloom time.

Narcissus, hyacinths, and other fragrant bulbs are also sometimes forced (brought into winter bloom indoors)—ask a Sky Sales Associate for information on the procedure.

See our bulb list on the reverse for general sun exposure, planting depth, and spacing suggestions for common fall-planted bulbs. Individual bulb packages will have recommendations for that specific variety.

In general, plant most bulbs about three times as deep as the bulb is tall. In colder areas, planting a little deeper can improve frost-hardiness. How far apart to put them depends on the final plant size, how fast the species increases, and the effect you like.

When choosing bulbs, select bulbs that are firm, and remember: in general, the larger the bulb the larger the bloom. Best selection for most bulbs is in September, but for most varieties, it is better to wait until the soil cools before planting, usually October through December. Bulbs that prefer to be planted immediately include bearded iris, colchicum, saffron crocus, cyclamen, lilies, and peonies. For tulips, daffodils, etc., purchase your bulbs early to get the best selection, but don't set the bags somewhere and forget about them! Keep your unplanted bulbs cool and dry with plenty of ventilation. Never keep bulbs in unvented plastic bags.

The first season bloom depends on the food stored in the bulb when you buy it. (That's why larger bulbs normally perform better.) In subsequent years, however, the flowers depend on the food the plant manufactures in its leaves. Do not cut off the leaves after the plant finishes blooming! Instead, fertilize the plant with a good bulb fertilizer again and let the leaves be until they die naturally. If the leaves become unsightly, plant taller, later-blooming plants around them, or hide the foliage with annual bedding plants.

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BOTANICAL NAME	BLOOM TIME*	EXPOSURE	DEPTH	SPACING	COMMENTS
Allium-Giant	Su	Full Sun	5"	8-10"	Several varieties available
Allium-most	MS-Su	Full Sun	2-3"	2-6"	Many varieties available
Anemone blanda	ES	Part Shade	1-2"	8-12"	
Anemone-other types	MS	Part Shade	1-2"	8-12"	
Bellevalia	LS	Sun/Shade	3"	2-3"	AKA Giant Grape Hyacinth
Camassia	Su	Full Sun	4"	6"	NW native; moist, heavy soil
Chionodoxa	VE	Part Shade	3"	3"	Keep moist
Colchicum-Autumn Crocus	F	Full Sun	3-4"	6-12"	Plant at once. Poisonous
Crocus-most	VE – ES	Sun/Shade	2-3"	4"	Likes light soil
Crocus sativus-Saffron	F	Full Sun	2-3"	3"	Plant at once. True Saffron
Eranthis	VE	Part Shade	3"	4"	Moist, light soil
Erythronium- Fawn Lily	MS	Part Shade	4"	4-5"	
Freesia		Indoors	2"	2"	Very fragrant
Fritillaria	MS – LS	Sun/Shade	2-6"	2-4"	
Galanthus-Snowdrops	VE	Sun/Shade	3-4"	2-3"	Moist, rich soil
Hyacinth	ES	Full Sun	4-6"	8"	
Hyacinthoides (Bluebells)	LS	Sun/Shade	4"	4"	
Ipheion- Starflower	ES	Sun/Shade	3"	3"	Honey-scented flowers
Iris-Bearded	LS – Su	Sun/Shade	½"	1-2 ft.	Plant at once. Rhizome type
Iris-Dutch or Dwarf	ES – Su	Full Sun	4"	3-4"	Bulb type
Ixia	LS	Full Sun	4"	3"	
Leucojum	F – LW	Part Shade	4"	4-8"	
Lily	Su	Sun/Shade	*2-6"	*6-12"	*Spacing depends on variety
Lycoris- Spider Lily	Su	Full Sun	2-3"	12"	Leaves vanish; flowers follow.
Muscari-Grape Hyacinth	MS	Sun/Shade	2"	4"	
Narcissus-Daffodil	ES – LS	Sun/Shade	*4-6"	*4-8"	*Spacing depends on variety
Paeonia- Peony	LS	Full Sun	2"	2-4 ft.	Plant at once.
Puschkinia	ES	Sun/Shade	3"	3"	
Ranunculus	LS	Full Sun	½ -2"	6-8"	Do not overwater.
Scilla	LS	Part Shade	4-5"	2"	
Sparaxis	LS	Full Sun	2"	2-3"	
Trillium	MS	Shade	1"	5-12"	Superb shade plant
Tulip	ES – LS	Full Sun	*4-8"	*4-8"	*Spacing depends on variety

***Bloom time codes (approximate): VE=Very Early Spring, ES=Early Spring, MS=Mid Spring, LS=Late Spring, VL=Very Late Spring, Su=Summer, F=Fall, LW=Late Winter**