

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.

Most bulb varieties prefer full sun with some wind protection. Shade lovers such as lily-of-the-valley and trillium will often thrive under deciduous trees that leaf out after their bloom time. Many bulbs also do well in containers; see the package or individual tear-off information sheets for planting instructions.

In general, plant true bulbs about three times as deep as the bulb is wide. In colder areas, planting a little deeper can improve frost-hardiness for bulbs you want to naturalize. How far apart to put them depends on the final plant size, how fast the species increases, and the effect you like. Suggested depths and spacing are included on our bulb variety list (reverse).

When choosing bulbs, select bulbs that are firm, and remember: in general, the larger the bulb the larger the bloom. Purchase your bulbs early to get the best selection, but don't set the bags somewhere and forget about them! Many varieties may be planted as soon as soil conditions permit (not frozen, not too soggy). Others need to wait until the soil warms more. For those varieties whose instructions say to wait until after the danger of frost has passed, in the Puget Sound area, April 15th is generally taken as the last frost date. Your microclimate may be earlier or later, and it also varies year to year—be sensitive to your conditions. Keep your unplanted bulbs cool and dry with plenty of ventilation. Never keep bulbs in unvented plastic bags. Some cold-sensitive bulbs such as elephant ear and begonias are typically started indoors in February and then transplanted outside when the weather warms.

The first season bloom depends primarily 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 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.

The list on the following page is alphabetical.

Spring Bulb Planting

COMMON NAME	EXPOSURE	DEPTH	SPACING	COMMENTS
Acidanthera (Peacock Lily)	Full Sun	2-4"	5"	Plant after frost
Amaryllis belladonna	Full Sun	Tip	8"	Rare and unusual
Anemone	Part Shade	1-2"	8-12"	Beautiful cut flower
Babiana (Blue Freesia)	Full Sun	3-4"	2-4"	Fragrant
Begonia	Shade	½"	4-8"	Start inside; outside in June
Bletilla (Chinese Ground Orchid)	Part Shade	1"	12"	Likes crowding and pots
Caladium	Sun/Shade	2-4"	6-12"	After frost, or start inside
Calla Lily- white and colors	Sun/Shade	4-6"	1-2 ft.	Plant after frost
Canna	Full Sun	4-5"	10"	Plant after frost
Crinum (Spider Lily)	Sun	Tip	2-4'	Plant after frost; likes heat
Crocsmia	Sun	3"	6"	Plant after frost
Dahlia	Full Sun	4-6"	1-3'	Plant after frost
Daylily (Hemerocallis)	Sun/Shade	1-2"	12-24"	Loads of flowers
Elephant Ear (Alocasia, Colocasia)	Full Sun	4-6"	1-2'	Start inside; outside in June
Freesia	Sun/Shade	2"	2"	Start inside; outside in June
Galtonia (Summer Hyacinth)	Sun	5"	6-12"	2-4' stalks of fragrant bells
Gladiolus	Sun	2-6"	4-8"	
Gloriosa Lily	Sun	2-4"	15-20"	Climbing habit
Iris- Siberian, Cristata	Sun	1-2"	*12-24"	*Depends on variety
Ismene (Hymenocallis)	Sun	6"	12"	Plant after frost
Ixia (Corn Lily)	Full Sun	4"	3"	Exotic
Liatris (Gayfeather)	Sun/Shade	2"	7"	
Lily, assorted	Sun/Shade	*2-6"	*6-12"	*Depends on variety
Lily-of-the-Valley	Shade	1-2"	6-12"	
Nerine	Sun	6"	12"	Very exotic
Ornithogalum (Star of Bethlehem)	Sun/Part Sun	4"	6"	
Oxalis (Wood Sorrel, Shamrock)	Sun/Shade	2"	4"	
Peony	Full Sun	2"	2-4 ft.	Fragrant, long-lived
Ranunculus	Full Sun	½ -2"	6-8"	Do not overwater
Sparaxis (Wandflower)	Full Sun	3-4"	4-8"	Late summer color
Sprekelia (Aztec Lily)	Full Sun	3"	8"	Dislikes winter rain
Tigridia (Mexican Shell Flower)	Sun	4-6"	6-8"	Plant after frost
Triteleia (Brodiaea, Triplet Lily)	Full Sun	3"	2"	
Trillium	Shade	1"	5"	Superb shade plant
Zephyranthes	Sun/Shade	2"	4-8"	