

Many bulbs are suitable for forcing (bringing into bloom out of season). In general, forcing bulbs is a 2-phase process.

Phase I

A time of cool darkness when roots are developed. **Hardy bulbs, including: Crocus, Daffodils/ Narcissus (except Paperwhites), Grape Hyacinths, Hyacinths, Miniature Iris and Tulips,** need period of 30° - 40° F temperatures. Most hardy bulbs generally need about 12 weeks of this treatment, which means starting the process in October for January or February bloom. By the end of this period, roots should be visible through the container drainage hole. If you take the plants out of Phase I prematurely, before the roots have developed adequately, the immature root system may not be developed enough to support the stem and flower growth. Although top growth may appear, it frequently topples over before the flowers open.

Phase II

At this point, you duplicate spring by bringing the pots into progressively warmer temperatures (up to 60° - 65° F) and into bright light. The Phase II conditions coax the stems and flowers to emerge from the bulbs.

FREESIAS

Phase I

Unlike most other bulbs which already contain dormant flower bulbs, freesias form their flower buds as they grow. Plant freesias in well-drained soil. Fill the pot to within two inches of the rim and then set the corms two inches apart with their tips pointing up. Cover the corms with an inch of soil and water well. Store in a darkened area with the temperature around 55°F for 45 days. Water only if the soil dries below the soil surface.

Phase II

Once tips emerge from the soil, bring the pots into a very brightly lit area. Freesias will need maximum light to manufacture enough food to develop their flowers. It will take up to three months for the freesias to develop flower stalks and begin blooming.

HYACINTHS

Phase II

There are two methods of planting hyacinths.

1. Planting in soil. Plant with tips of the bulbs even with the top edge of the pot. The soil level should be about 3/4" from the rim. Store in a darkened area with the temperature between 35-45°F for 8-12 weeks. Bulbs forced in soil will have a deeper blossom color.

2. Potted in water. Use a bulb forcing vase to help support the bulb just above the water level. Add enough water so the bulb's base is barely touching the water. Check the water level

frequently. A bit of charcoal in the water will help keep it clear. Give water-grown hyacinths a slow, cool start, about 40 - 50°F. Keep them in a dark location for around 13 weeks.

Phase II

Once the hyacinth has 2-3" of shoots growing, place the hyacinth in a warmer location which has a lot of bright light for 4 weeks.

CROCUS

Phase I

Plant crocus in a shallow pot with the bulbs' noses just at the soil surface. Store in a darkened area with the temperature around 35 - 45°F for 7-12 weeks. Crocus are one of the easiest and the quickest outdoor/hardy bulbs to force.

Phase II

Move into the light in a 60°F area for about 2 weeks. Crocus flower buds develop quickly when the pots are brought into light. After flowering, plant outside for enjoyment as a garden bulb in the future.

NARCISSUS & DAFFODILS (OTHER THAN PAPERWHITES)

Phase I

Plant 5 to 6 bulbs in a 6" or 7" pot. Store in a darkened area with temperatures around 55-60°F. Allow around 10 weeks for root development.

Phase II

When the leaves are about 3" tall and buds are visible, move the containers to a cool, brightly lit area. 55-60°F, The cooler the temperature, the longer the flowers will last. Small rock garden narcissus are especially pretty in a container. After flowers fade and the foliage withers, bulbs may be stored for later planting in the garden.

TULIPS

Phase I

Fill pots to within 3" of the rim with well-drained potting soil. Place bulbs with the flat sides facing outward and the tips up. Leave 1/2 - 1" space between bulbs. Add more soil around the bulbs, firm the soil and water well. The bulb tops should just barely be covered. Store pots in a dark, cool area for 10-12 weeks.

Phase II

When the plants are about 4" tall and the buds are visible, move them into a slightly warmer, light room. Tulips may be sped up by bringing them to room temperature or slowed down by keeping them cool. After flowers fade and the foliage withers, bulbs may be stored for later planting in the garden.