

6 Must-Read Tips For Planting Bulbs In The Fall

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Bulbs are one of the best ways to have a colorful spring garden, but when it comes to fall bulb planting, there are a few things you'll need to know. Try out these tips this fall, and you should have lots of beautiful blooms next spring!

1. The Right Way to Plant Fall Bulbs

As you are planting bulbs, there are a few things to remember. First, make sure that you choose a spot with at least 6 hours of sunlight. For early bloomers, like daffodils, you can plant in a spot that gets sun before the trees have leaves in the spring. By the time trees start shading your bulb bed, early blooming bulbs should be almost finished for the year. Bulbs also like soil that is rich with organic matter or compost, and they love well-drained soil. Soggy soil or overwatering will cause them to rot. Finally, when you are ready to plant, the general rule of thumb is to plant a bulb three times as deep as the bulb is tall, making sure the pointy part is facing upwards.

2. Prepare the Bulb Bed Well

You don't want to simply dig a hole and plant the bulb. For the best growth, make sure that you prepare a bed ahead of planting. This means that you'll need to remove weeds and loosen the soil. It is also a good idea to add compost for nutrients or sand for drainage before you plant.

3. Buy at the Right Time

This is a tough one because nowadays, many stores are selling their fall bulbs in July or August, because they want gardening supplies out of the way in time to set up holiday displays. This means that you'll either need to store your bulbs carefully

for a month or three, or you'll need to order online or by mail at planting time so that you have fresh, healthy bulbs. If you are stuck buying your bulbs early, then make sure they are firm and plump, with no mold or rot. Leave them in the bag that you purchased them in, and then place that bag in a paper lunch bag so that you can store the bulbs in the fridge without making a mess.

4. Plant at the Right Time

It differs from one climate zone to the next, but no matter where you live, there are a few ways to judge whether or not it is the right time to plant your fall bulbs. In general, try to plant when nightly temperatures are around 40 or 50 degrees, or about six weeks before you expect the ground to freeze. Most spring bulbs need a chilly period to bloom, so if you live in an area where the ground doesn't freeze (zones 8 to 11), then you'll need to chill them. Leave the bulbs in the bags you bought them in, and simply place them in your refrigerator for six to 10 weeks before planting. Make sure that you don't store bulbs with fruits, since the gasses that fruit gives off can make your bulbs go bad.

5. Plant the Right Bulbs

Not all bulbs should be planted in the fall. Dahlias and gladiolus should be planted in the spring, for instance, while daffodils and tulips do well when planted in late summer or early autumn. Here is the rule of thumb: If you are planting a bulb that blooms in the spring, plant it in the fall. For bulbs that bloom early summer or later, plant them in the spring.

6. Wait for Spring to Fertilize

Once you have the bulbs in the ground, they'll stay dormant for the remainder of the fall and winter, so you won't need to bother with fertilizing. Wait until you start to see the first shoots of spring, because that is an indicator that the roots are growing and ready for nutrients. You'll also want to make sure that you don't fertilize after the bulbs start to flower because this will inhibit bulb growth. If you haven't tried bulbs in your garden, you definitely should. With daffodils, hyacinths, tulips and other early spring bloomers, bulb beds will give you beautiful color long before the rest of your garden starts to grow.