

How to plant bulbs

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I had a request from a friend to write an article on the proper planting of bulbs. I know that it can be a somewhat confusing process and this is an effort to make it a bit simpler for all of you frustrated gardeners out there.

Bulbs are a great way to add color and variety to your garden. The best time of year to plant most bulbs is in the fall. When spring arrives, you should have an array of color burst forth from the soil from your properly planted bulbs.

It is vital that you prep your soil before you stick the bulb into it. You will need to make sure that drainage is good. If you have lots of clay or other matter in your soil that keeps it from draining very well, you can add compost or peat moss to it to help the situation. When adding soil additives it is important to work the substance into the first 12 inches of soil. The deeper you go the better. But strive to get at least the first foot worked in.

As with all plants, it is essential to do your homework. If the plant will require full sun, make sure the area you are planting it is a sunny spot. Or if it requires partial shade, make sure to plant it in an area that is shady some of the time.

The general rule of thumb for planting bulbs is plant 3 times as deep as the bulb is tall. Planting depth is measured from the bottom of the bulb. Some bulbs, such as summer bulbs, may have individual and different planting requirements. The best thing to do is read the package or get on the Internet and do a little research to make sure you're planting the bulb properly.

When placing the bulb in the hole, make sure the nose is pointing up toward the sky and the bottom, where the roots are, is facing the bottom of the hole. If you don't see any roots, look at the bulb and place the most pointed side face up. Most bulbs are larger or more flat on the bottom and pointier toward the top.

Okay, now you have the bulb planted in the hole, cover with the soil mixture you worked with the compost or peat moss. Water the bulbs after planting; this helps the soil to settle and provides needed moisture so that the plants can begin to root. Do not overwater though as this will cause bulb rot. The rule of thumb is to add about an inch of water per week. If it has rained, obviously you don't have to water.

Once spring arrives, hopefully you will be able to enjoy your beautiful flowers. By late spring or early summer, the foliage will begin to die back. Summer is the dormant period for spring bulbs. It is time to dig up the bulbs and store them for next season. Some bulbs benefit from being dug up, divided and spread out over the entire area. Others simply bloom year after year without being bothered. You can tell if you need to dig up your bulbs by the smaller flower size, uneven bloom and uneven plant height. If you see these signs, you need to dig up the bulbs, divide them up and spread them out.

Most bulbs should be dug up when the leaves on the plants turn yellow. According to the type, most bulbs should be removed from the ground, washed off and dried off and placed in a moist layer of peat moss or sawdust in a cool place. They should be stored away from sunlight in an area where the temperature will not go below 50 degrees or above 70 degrees. Another ideal way to store them is on trays with screen bottoms. If you only have a few bulbs, you can store them in paper bags hung by strings. Be sure that air can circulate around the bulbs while stored and never store them more than 2 or 3 layers deep. If possible try to make sure the bulbs are stored in an area where humidity is low.

Hopefully, for those of you who are interested in planting bulbs in your garden, this article has been helpful. If not, there is a wealth of information on the Internet and most nurseries are happy to give gardening tips when asked. Happy Gardening!