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## Growing Beautiful Flowers From Bulbs

By Yvonne Volante

When most people think of bulbs they often think of daffodils or other similar flowers. However, the bulbous variety of flowers goes well beyond that.

While tulips, hyacinths and snowdrops also belong with the 'true' bulb family, there are many flowers that have corms, rhizomes or tubers. These include agapanthus and hippeastrums, dahlias, cannas and other lilies, irises, begonias, anemones and amaryllis, to name just a few.

Not only do bulbs do the work of reproducing the plant, they store food for those months when the leaves die and the plant is dormant. Thus, when the conditions are right the new plant has all it needs to thrust new shoots up into the sunlight.

Most bulbs need moist, rich, free draining soil and a sunny position to grow happily. Many flower in the spring, but such is their diversity, it is possible to have bulbs flowering in every month of the year.

To grow bulbs such as tulips in a temperate region, keep them in the refrigerator for four to eight weeks before planting out at the coldest time of year. In cold areas, plant in late autumn. Tulips like warm, dry summers alkaline soil. They may be affected by aphids, or a fungal condition called 'tulip fire' if there is too much moisture about. Their vibrant colors make them well worth a place in the garden.

Bulbs will usually do well if their natural habitat is approximated in the garden. For instance, daffodils are meadow flowers, so like plenty of sun. They will naturalize successfully in the lawn and flower early before the grass becomes too competitive. It's best not to mow for at least six weeks after the flowers die, because the leaves provide food to the bulb for next years' growth.

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Woodland bulbs like bluebells and snowdrops will do better in a semi-shaded or a dappled sun position. They do well under deciduous trees. Spring-flowering bulbs may be planted near a well-used path or where they can be seen from a window to save trekking over soggy lawns to admire them.

Most bulbs can be grown successfully in containers, but need at least four inches ((10 cm)) of soil below them and 2–4 inches (5–10 cm) above. It's a good idea to plant bulbs in a pot and bury it in the garden to prevent them from being accidentally hoed during a weeding session. If you have trouble with rodents eating your bulbs, plant them inside a wire cage buried in the garden.

Many bulbous varieties grow easily and are quite tolerant. Do your research, however. Some of the more unusual ones can be found via mail order or on the internet, so take the time to look for them. You'll be pleased with the result.

Yvonne Volante, the author, is a big fan of

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is the premier flower resource on the internet. You can see all of the articles over at

<http://www.flowerpd.com>

### **The Best Flowers For Spring**

**By Jennifer Houck**

After a long, cold winter, you are probably anxious for the first signs of spring. Springtime automatically brings thoughts of flowers. Choosing the best flowers for spring can be difficult and it is often confusing. Perhaps the most effective way to ensure spring flowers that bloom each year is to plant bulbs in the fall to mid-winter. There are of course flowering plants that you can purchase from your local nursery, but you will want to make sure any chance of freezing weather has passed before planting and in many areas of the country, spring does not arrive until late in the season and by that time you will want to plant flowers in anticipation of summer. You always have the option of purchasing bulbs that have been grown in pots over the winter and are in stock in most garden centers beginning in the late winter months. Here are a few choices of flowering plants that are suitable to plant now and will produce early spring flowers:

Winter Aconite, or *Eranthis hyemalis*, will give you yellow flowers approximately three inches in height and resemble common buttercups. These particular bulbs may begin to flower as early as January if you live in a warm area and you will get the best results if you plant them in masses as they grow low to the ground.

Glory Of The Snow, or *Chionodoxa luciliare*, produce flowers that are bright blue with a white center. The plants will grow between six and ten inches tall, making this particular plant very handy for

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walkways, borders, and rock gardens. You may also be able to find white/pink varieties depending on the area in which you live

Spring Snowflake, or *leucojum vernum*, give you bell-shaped flowers that droop from the green part of the plant. These plants will be six to twelve inches in height and are white in color with small green spots on the ends of the petals. You will get the best results if you plant them in clumps and you can expect to see blooms in late February to early March. As with any other springtime bulb, they are best planted in the fall but you can plant in the mid to late winter if you purchase potted bulbs that have already begun the growing cycle.

Netted Iris, or *iris reticulata*, are wonderfully scented and are most commonly purple in color, although you can also find light blue and white irises in many areas. Irises are one of the earliest blooming plants and you can expect a beautiful display of flowers in early March. As with any other type of bulb, after several growing seasons you will have to thin the bulbs from time to time, as they tend to reproduce rapidly and could actually begin to stunt the growth of the plants due to over-crowding

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resource for learning how to grow your flowers.

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