

Bulbs

for Spring Planting

In Southern California

Laguna Hills Nursery

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Compared to other ways of introducing summer color into your garden planting bulbs in spring is the easiest way to get started. Bulbs are sleeping when purchased, but are mature plants, at peak strength, ready to perform. Most other blooming bedding plants are sold at an immature stage and must be given extra care until established.

Bulb plants are perennials. They are native to climates that have at least one season of conditions unfavorable to growing, either cold or drought. They have no permanent structures, but the same plant will live year after year. During the unfavorable periods the bulb plant will shed its foliage and roots, but at the same time store energy and fertilizer in a sturdy package ready for immediate growth once favorable conditions occur.

A typical bulb will emerge from the soil with foliage first. If the bulb is mature enough (all bulbs we sell are mature) a flower stalk will grow and bloom. After the flower fades the foliage remains green for a period allowing the production and storage of energy for next year's bloom. A new bulb forms as the foliage turns yellow and dies back.

Locating a site

Bulbs perform quite well in full to half sun. Many bulbs will bloom in shade, but require a sunnier location to perform well year after year. Bulbs can be grown in just about any small or large open spot in the garden. Experienced gardeners will often plant bulbs along with another perennial or annual flower with a complimentary growing period so that the space is always occupied.

Preparing the Site

Most types of bulbs prefer soil that has decent drainage or permeability. Drainage can be improved by raising the soil level (create mounds or raised beds). Amending the soil with **Laguna Hills Nursery PLANTER MIX** or large amounts of sand improves the soil's permeability. We do not recommend amending the soil with large quantities of organic mulches or manures. Most bulbs will perform adequately without any soil modification.

All bulbs are good container plants. Most will perform well in just about any type of potting soil. For more long-lived bulbs or bulbs that require better drainage, our **TOP POT POTTING SOIL** or **ACID MIX** are perfect.

Planting the Bulb

Bulbs make a more appealing display if planted in groups of the same type and variety. Three bulbs may be adequate for a pot, but it may take 50+ to be noticeable from the street. Most bulbs multiply over the years.

When planting a large area it is more efficient to first place the bulbs on top of the soil spaced properly. It is not essential to be spaced exactly as recommended. In Nature bulbs are usually seen in colonies with random spacing. Dig a hole to the recommended depth with a hand trowel or bulb auger. The depth is not critical. Most bulbs will readjust their depth at the end of the season. Place the bulb upright and fill the hole. If you can't tell which way is up, place the bulb sideways. Firm the soil gently and cover the surface with mulch.

If the soil is dusty dry, apply several brief irrigations to moisten it.

Later Care

Most bulbs will perform normally with moderate to average irrigation. None require fertilizer initially, but future results can be improved if organic fertilizers and/or mulches are applied before or during the growth period.

After the bloom do not remove the foliage until it is totally yellowed. Most spring bulbs can be left in the ground during their dormant period.

The Popular Bulbs

Dahlias have become the most important spring planted bulb. These perennials will produce a nearly continuous show of color from June through October. Their brilliant long-lasting flowers include every color except true blue. Flowers can be solid colors or blends and bi-colors. Plant size ranges from 1-10+ feet and flower size ranges from 2-10 inches wide. Locally, Dahlias can be left in the ground through winter dormancy, but should be relocated every 3-4 years for best results. Dahlias are native to Central America from Mexico to Columbia. They were brought to Europe as a possible food crop, but were found to be better as an ornamental than an edible.

Gladiolus have always be popular and easy to grow. Typically the popular varieties grow 5 feet tall and bloom for 2-4 weeks from mid spring to early summer. Under ideal conditions the bulbs will bloom 100 days after planting. The bulbs can be left in the ground for many years. If planted after mid-April the plants must be treated for *thrips* (a bug that severely distorts the foliage and flowers). **Spinosad** is an effective organic treatment. The popular large Gladiolus was discovered around 1900 in South Africa near Victoria Falls on the Zambesi River.

Lilies are perhaps the most enchanting combination of color and fragrance. Currently the most popular are called Oriental Lilies. These plants generally grow 3-4 feet tall topped with large, fragrant flowers. Each flower lasts about a week with the entire show lasting a month. Lilies prefer moist soil with excellent drainage. Morning sun and afternoon shade give the best results. Lilies are native to the Northern Hemisphere with Asia providing the important species.

Canna lilies are usually sold growing in containers rather than as a rhizome. They have become very popular with the introduction of the varieties with foliage that has intricate patterns of contrasting colors. The flower colors include cream, yellow, orange, pink or red. Typically flowering occurs from spring through fall and occasionally all year if the winter is mild. The foliage disappears following a frost and reappears in spring. Cannas are native to tropical regions of North and South America.

Calla lilies include several types. The Common White Calla is essentially evergreen blooming heavily from winter through spring. The Colored Callas are bulbs that emerge in spring and bloom in summer for several months. All are native to South Africa. Callas will perform well in sun or shade. They prefer moist to wet conditions.

Tuberose is a popular florist flower that boasts a powerful sweet fragrance. The foliage emerges in spring and bloom occurs several months between late spring and early fall. The small, waxy white flowers occur in tall spikes 2-4 feet tall. Tuberose is native to Mexico.