



Redding Garden Club

Garden Tips

Choosing Bulbs for Spring

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There are so many spring flowering bulbs to choose from that it gets a little confusing. To keep it simple, think of a color scheme that attracts you. For example: do you like warm colors or cool colors? That kind of decision reduces the choices by half. Next, look at the size of your property and list the soil conditions of your location. It could be too wet, or too dry for bulbs. Does the hose reach the garden? Also consider what your garden looked like last spring. What can you add to enhance what you already have? Bulbs can be expensive so good planning really pays off. Most bulbs are perennials and are good for naturalizing. Here are some popular types of bulbs:

Tulips -- Tulips are not perennials. There are some that will repeat, however. Tulips like a neutral pH and well draining soil. They should be deadheaded after blooming and allowed to die back with their leaves still on. Plant 6" to 8" deep and 6" apart. Top dressing with a 4-10-6 flower bulb fertilizer is advised. But, remember that deer love tulips.

Narcissi -- Trumpet daffodils or long cupped narcissi can be used for naturalizing and will repeat. They are deer and rodent resistant. Daffodils are poisonous to animals. Plant 6" to 8" deep and 6" apart. Top dress with a 4-10-6 flower bulb fertilizer. Let the foliage grow and die back, uncut and untied.

Anemone windflower -- Small daisy-like flowers. Good ground cover. They can be forced in pots.

Small rock-garden bulbs -- All good for naturalizing. Scilla, Muscari, Chionodoxa, Galanthus, Oxalis and others are very beautiful.

Hyacinths -- Multi-flowered spikes. Very fragrant. Planting is the same as tulips.

Alliums -- Dense sphere, long stem, deer and rodent resistant. They like rich, well-drained soil and sunlight. Plant 6" to 8" deep and 8" to 10" apart.

Lilies -- Asiatic, Oriental, Tigrinum and Chinese trumpet lilies all like well-drained soil with a neutral pH and will tolerate some shade. Fertilize with a 4-10-6 fertilizer three times a year.

Ranunculus and Freesia -- Wonderful bulbs for forcing in pots. They need not be pre-cooled, but can be grown in a cool greenhouse or a cool window.

Amaryllis -- **South African** varieties flower in six weeks once they are potted (Christmas flowering). **Dutch Amaryllis** need a good 8 - 12 weeks once they are potted. These should be stored in a dry 50-degree F place.

It is difficult to think of spring now with our drought. But the effort that you put in now will show up in a spectacular spring. Make the effort.

On the next page is a chart of diseases, harmful insects, and problems for bulbs.

Diseases, Harmful Insects & Problems for Bulbs

CONDITION	CAUSE	SOLUTION
Bulb is soft, decayed or chalky	Bulb rot	Dig up bulb and discard. Inspect bulbs before planting. If there is any sign of disease, do not plant. Do not plant healthy new bulbs where diseased bulbs previously grew. If you are going to store bulbs, dry bulbs and dust them with the organic fungicide sulfur.
Plant rots at top of bulb or rhizome	Crown rot	Dig up and destroy diseased bulbs or rhizomes and the surrounding 6 inches of soil. Divide overcrowded plantings. In the future, solarize the soil before planting, or plant in disease-free well-drained soil.
Bulbs rot or produce little growth	Bulb mite, bulb fly	Remove yellowing foliage. Dig and destroy rotting bulbs, or bulbs that are infested with maggots. Inspect bulbs before planting and discard those with symptoms. Plant healthy bulbs in a different location.
Bulbs that have knot-like swelling, leaves are yellow & stunted	Root-knot nematode	Try to revive plants with water and fertilizer. Dig and discard damaged bulbs. Introduce beneficial soil organisms by incorporating compost into soil. Solarize soil before replanting the area. Don't use straw for mulching bulbs; rodents love to nest in it.