



Healthy Garden Tips

BULBS IN POTS

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Many kinds of bulbs are easy to grow in pots and force into early indoor bloom. The tulip, hyacinth, narcissus, crocus, anemone, yellow calla, tuberous begonia, are among the bulbs most commonly used, although there are many others that can be grown in pots successfully. The hyacinth, tuberous begonia, freesia, and narcissus are most easily grown. Daffodils do fairly well, especially where the pots are large. Tulips do well if the moisture and temperature are properly regulated, but the blooms may be ruined by high temperatures.

The growing of cyclamens, gloxinias, and certain similar bulbs is largely limited to greenhouse conditions. Cyclamen culture is difficult for the beginner, since the cyclamen mite and other troubles must be controlled. Growing lilies in pots is a special undertaking, and cannot be recommended for the beginner. Most of the lilies sold at Easter have been forced and carried along in a greenhouse. As the novice gains experience, he may wish to try some of the more difficult bulbs if the proper cultural conditions can be provided.

Five or six-inch pots give better results than very small pots for most bulbs. The bulbs usually should not be planted deeper than one inch below the surface, and may be planted much closer together than is customary in open beds. The common practice is to plant 1 or 2 bulbs in a five-inch pot, 3 bulbs in a six-inch pot, and 5 bulbs in an eight-inch pot.

The potting mixture should generally be a light one, containing loam, leaf mold, sand, and occasionally charcoal. Use a commercially available potting soil or raised bed mix. Be sure it drains well before planting. Do not over fertilize. Give a light fertilizer after bulbs begin growing. A home prepared mix of 1/3 sphagnum peat, 1/3 perlite and 1/3 sandy soil works well.

The planted pots should be set in a cool, dark place until the bulbs begin to root. They can then be brought into the light. It usually takes 8 to 10 weeks for the roots to become established. Optimum temperatures range from 50-60°F.

Regular attention should be given to the potted bulbs. Bulbs planted in a light mixture should be watered carefully to prevent drying out. It is possible to place one pot inside another, filling the space between with compost, peat moss, or sand to reduce evaporation. The planted pots are sometimes buried in the outside garden or in a bed of sand. If the pots are exposed to drying air outside, the bulbs may fail to develop and bloom. The control of soil moisture is less difficult under greenhouse conditions.