



Healthy Garden Tips

FORCING BULBS TO BLOOM EARLY

By Dean Donaldson, Farm Advisor

The process takes about 10 weeks. Start in early October for blooms at New Year's.

- Step 1** Select large, healthy bulbs and soak them in water for 24 hours. Adding a rooting hormone, like Rootone, will help promote active rooting.
- Step 2** Plant in moist potting soil. Six-inch size pots can hold 6 tulips or 3 hyacinths or 3 daffodils or 15 crocuses. Set bulbs so necks are even with the top of the soil. Tulip bulbs are placed with the flat side facing the outer edge of the pot. Allow a half inch of space between the lip of the pot and the top of the soil for watering. Water twice to settle the soil around the bulbs. No fertilizer is needed, since it should already be in the potting mix.
- Step 3** Watered pots should be stored in the cold (35-48°F) for a minimum of 10 weeks. This will “break dormancy” and allow time for good root growth before they are moved indoors. Consider putting them in an unheated garage or shed. Be sure pots do not dry out while in cold storage. They do not need sunlight while they are growing roots in the cold area.
- Step 4** When you start to see green leaves growing, begin to bring the pots indoors. Bring in a few each week so you will have flowers for a longer time. Put the pots in a cool room (50-70°F) with lots of good light. The cooler the room, the longer the flowers will last. Water the pots regularly for good flower development.
- Step 5** After the flowers fade, move the pots outside and give the bulbs a ‘rest.’ The leaves should gradually turn yellow and dry. These bulbs will be too weak to force the following year, but can be planted in the yard for future flowers.

Additional Reading:

Ortho Books: *House Plants Indoors/Outdoors*

Lane Publishing: *Sunset Western Garden Book*

American Horticultural Society: *Daffodil Handbook*, also American Horticultural Magazine, Vol. 42 No. 2