



NEWSPAPER ARTICLES

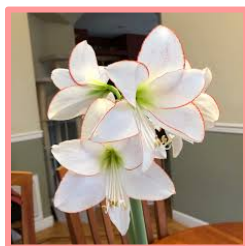
Bulb-planting Time: Between the Pumpkin and the Turkey (September 14, 2024)

by Tulare/Kings Counties Master Gardeners

Anticipation is half the fun when gardening. Since November is the best time to plant bulbs in the San Joaquin Valley, it's a good time to start ordering or buying bulbs now. Reject any moldy, soft, or sprouting bulbs because they won't perform in the spring. Here are a few ideas and techniques for using bulbs.

Patriotic flare: In this election year, what about a display of our flag's colors? Try planting red and white amaryllis in a blue pot with a big red, white, and blue ribbon tied around it. Or, try a combination of red tulips and white tulips with Delft blue hyacinth, or blend red anemones with white tulips and dark blue pansies. Perhaps you have some other ideas. Let your imagination go!

Fooling bulbs: Bulbs can be "forced" into thinking spring has already arrived. Here is an easy way to plant bulbs indoors for holiday gifts. Place an inch of clean pebbles or gravel (fish aquarium gravel works well and comes in a variety of colors) in the bottom of a shallow bowl. Pack narcissus or daffodil bulbs close together in the bowl, and then fill around the bulbs with more gravel to anchor them in place. Fill the bowl with water just till the water barely touches the bottom of the bulbs, and set the bowl in a window with indirect sunlight. Within a couple of weeks, the bulbs will begin to sprout, and in 4-6 weeks, they will be in full bloom. Rotate the bowl every couple of days so that the stems will grow straight. If the stems get tall and want to lean, tie raffia or ribbon around them, and use 2-3 long sticks or bamboo (chopsticks work well!) to anchor the stems into the pebbles.



Amaryllis bulbs are a popular holiday gift. It can be found in many nurseries or home improvement stores in colors varying from red or white to pink or peppermint. A single bulb will provide cheer during the winter months. One of the beauties of amaryllis is that, after the blooms are gone, you can plant the bulb in the garden for continued enjoyment.

Outdoor planting guidelines: Some of the most popular bulbs, which can be planted in the ground until Thanksgiving, are amaryllis, anemone, calla lily, canna, freesia, gladiolus, iris, narcissus (daffodil), ranunculus, and tulip.

1. Select firm bulbs, not mushy or diseased ones.
2. Soak the bulbs in water for ½ hour.
3. Loosen the soil where you will be planting to a depth of up to 12 inches.
4. Dig a hole three times as deep as the bulb is wide, and amend the bottom of the hole with bulb fertilizer or bone meal.
5. Plant the bulbs with the pointed tip up.
6. Plant bulbs in masses to make a greater impact.
7. Water the bulbs well.

Funny-looking bulbs: While most bulbs have a distinct bulb shape (pointed on top, round at the root), other bulbs like corms, tubers, and rhizomes are tricky. Dahlia bulbs should lie on their sides. Begonia tubers have a volcano crater on top, which should be on top when planted. Ranunculus bulbs look like dancers at Radio City Music Hall, so when planting, all their "legs" should be pointed down. Anemone bulbs look like little turtles, with very little root evident. If undecided which is the top, just plant the corm on its side, confident that the shoot will find its way to the sun. Bearded iris is long rhizomes and should be planted more shallowly because, like beach bums, they like their backs slightly exposed to the sun.



Chilling: Some cold-weather-loving bulbs do better when they go through a chilling period in the refrigerator. Tulips, crocus, hyacinth, and snowdrops should be chilled in the refrigerator for 10-12 weeks since our valley doesn't get cold enough for their natural needs.

Take advantage of the cooler weather to enjoy some garden time, planting your carefully chosen bulbs. Then settle in for winter and let these compact, self-contained power plants get ready to surprise you in the spring.

The Tulare-Kings Counties Master Gardeners will answer your questions in person:

Visalia Farmer's Market, 1st & 3rd Saturdays, 8 - 11 am, Tulare Co. Courthouse
Sept 26, 4-7 pm, Kings County Resource Fair, Hanford Civic Auditorium

Questions? Call the Master Gardeners:

Tulare County: (559) 684-3325, Tues & Thurs, 9:30-11:30;

Kings County: (559) 852-2736, Thursday Only, 9:30–11:30 am

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