



## Bulb Basics

### For a Beautiful Spring

I've always known a few things about bulbs. I knew you plant bulbs in the fall and they come up as gorgeous blooms and foliage in the spring. As a kid I learned about the seemingly endless selection of color, size, shape, and design and spent hours trying to decide which bulb I liked the best of the stunning flowers. But I wanted to learn more, so this fall I decided to brush up on my bulb basics by asking the experts at Joe's Greenhouse about the process behind getting those dazzling, must-have blooms. I learned it all comes down to four things: gathering the right supplies, choosing your bulbs, planting, and follow-up on spring success.

#### Gathering Supplies

- Soil. Think drainage and nutrients with products like Soil Pep®, Nutrimulch®. Look for fertilizer especially labeled for bulbs like Hi-Yield Bone Meal® and Dutch Bulb Food®. Joe's Greenhouse potting soil is always the best for any container planting.
- Sturdy Spade. Any will do, but if you have exceptionally hard soil or are looking to save on labor, check out a bulb planter that attaches to a drill for quick and easy digging.
- Bulbs!

#### Know What to Grow—Choosing Your Bulbs

- Choose large, quality bulbs. Bigger is better for individual varieties.
- Bulbs generally come in three blooming categories: early spring, mid-spring, and late spring. Plan ahead to complement and compensate for bloom times of existing perennials or mix all three bloom types for continuous spring color. Plant bulbs below and plant pansies on top for a stunning spring display.
- Do you need a deer and mouse resistant bulb? It comes as no surprise that the National Garden Bureau 2016 bulb of the year, allium, along with the 2017 bulb of the year, the well-known daffodil, make the deer and mouse resistant list. Other good choices in that category include hyacinths, scilla, and fritillaria.

## Joe's Greenhouse Fall Newsletter

September 2016



**Top Left:** Tete-a-tete window box **Top Right:** Allium bulbs **Bottom Right:** Dutchmaster blooms **Below Right:** Daffodils and Grape Hyacinths **Bottom Right:** Narcissus (Daffodil) bulbs

For more information on the NGB bulb of the year award, visit [www.ngb.org](http://www.ngb.org).

### Planting

- A good rule of thumb for spacing is to plant bulbs with the pointy side up 3 times as deep as the bulb is wide.
- Plant in clusters rather than rows in flower beds.
- Planting bulbs in the shade may produce foliage with few blooms. Stick with full or part sun when possible.
- Experiment with layering for fun visual effects. Try tall, late blooming daffodils on the bottom, layer with loose soil, and plant short, early blooming crocus or hyacinth on top to keep color coming in all season. Turning bulbs sideways or even upside down may stagger bloom time for identical bulbs.
- If planting in containers, choose ones with adequate drainage. Make sure bulbs don't touch the outside of the pot. You may want to insulate with bubble wrap or bring the containers into the garage when expecting a hard freeze.



### Spring Success....Then What?

- Enjoy those beautiful bulb blooms!
- Bulbs last a long time, but new bulbs can be added in for better color.
- Let foliage die back as much as possible before cutting back for more vigorous plants next year.

Don't forget that now is the best time to plant bulbs, so hurry to get them off of your to-do list and into your growing space! And with these bulb basics under your belt, you're now not only a bulb pro but can anticipate showy bulb beds year after year.



By Anna McBride, Editor. All Photos Courtesy of National Garden Bureau

Joe's Greenhouse Newsletter September 2016  
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