



# Class Information

## BULBS

### Spring Flowering

After a long grey winter, it's so nice to have your garden, patio or balcony in colour once again. With spring-flowering bulbs, you can start enjoying a lavish display of flowers as early as February. Crocuses, tulips and hyacinths are some of the earliest to start brightening up the views outside your windows. So if you're making plans for the garden, don't forget to include those spring flowering bulbs!

### Months of flowering pleasure

Every bulb has its own flowering period. If you know when each one blooms, you can be delighted in their displays at the very outset of spring. Winter aconites and snowdrops are the traditional harbingers of spring, their bright yellow and whiter always a promise of more to come. Close on their heels will be crocuses, glory of the snow (Chionodoxa), narcissi and the first early tulips. In April and May, it's time for grape hyacinths, later-flowering tulips and the impressive crown imperials (fritillaria). Ornamental onions (Allium) flower from mid-May to far into July. As you can see, making the right choices can provide you with six months of glorious colour.

### Flower bulbs planted in garden soil

#### Planting

Before planting, loosen the soil thoroughly and work some compost into it if needed. Dig a planting hole and place the bulbs in it in an upright position. Small bulbs can be scattered.

## **When to plant**

Spring-flowering bulbs can be planted from September to December. Do try to plant them before the frost sets in, however.

## **Planting depth**

The general rule for planting depth is: plant a bulb twice as deep as it is tall. This means that the right depth for large bulbs such as narcissi, tulips and hyacinths is about 15 to 20 centimeters deep. The right depth for smaller bulbs such as snowdrops and crocuses is around 5 to 10 centimeters.

## **Distance apart**

Large flower bulbs need more space between them than small bulbs. Plant large bulbs leaving an average space between them of 12 cm, small bulbs need only an average of 5-7cm between. The space between the bulbs (or the number of bulbs you plant in each square metre) depends on the visual effect you wish to achieve. For a casual, natural effect, plant the bulbs at unequal distances apart. You could also scatter some fine gravel or cat box filler into the planting holes before planting the bulbs.

## **Soil Type and drainage**

Rainwater is fairly easily drained from sandy soil. Clay soils, on the other hand, have the tendency to remain moist for a longer time. Bulbs don't like having "wet feet", so if they are planted in a clay soil, make sure that the water can drain away. To make clay soil somewhat porous, add sand or compost to it. You could also scatter some fine gravel or cat box filler into the planting holes before planting the bulbs.

## **Water and frost**

Provide the bulbs with water as soon as you plant them. This stimulates them to start producing roots. The earlier the roots are formed, the faster the bulbs will be able to tolerate cold and frost. Watering can be discontinued when the autumn rains are on the way.

## **Flowering bulbs in pots and containers**

### **Planting is simple**

Patios and balconies are increasingly seen as an extension of the living room. In the summer, you can look out at blooming plants and annuals in pots and containers. In the spring, flower bulbs can provide the colour to brighten up your view. Planting flower bulbs in pots is so

simple. For a pot or container, choose one that is not too small and make sure it has a drainage hole in the bottom. To cover the drainage hole, place a couple of pot shards or some clay granules over it. This allows excess water to drain off easily. Next, start filling the pot or container with potting soil. Fill just to the level at which the bulbs will be at the right planting depth (for the right planting depth see the rule mentioned before in this folder).

Now place the bulbs on top of the soil and fill the pot up to a level just beneath the edge. Bulbs in pots and containers can easily be planted a bit more closely together than in garden soil. A denser planting will produce a prettier visual effect. Also use a variation in flowering height for a varied, natural look.

### **Leaving the bulbs in the ground**

Many bulbs can remain in the ground after flowering. Leave them undisturbed and give the leaves the chance to die back. Next year, they will produce another profuse display of flowers. But this means that they will need to receive some fertilizer. Provide the fertilizer (organic or artificial fertilizer) when the bulbs emerge from the soil and repeat this immediately after flowering.

#### **Tip 1**

In general, bulbs in pots will not suffer any damage from winter cold. Even so, remember not to let them come too close to the edges of the pots when planting them. After all this is exactly where frost can penetrate later. If you expect a very hard freeze, you can wrap the pots with a material like plastic bubble-wrap. Or, place them temporarily in a room where the temperature will not get any warmer than 13 degrees Celsius

#### **Tip 2**

Terra cotta pots can break due to freezing weather. This is because the soil in the pot swells when it freezes. You can avoid this problem by planting the flower bulbs first in a plastic pot and then putting this "inside pot" into a terra cotta pot. If you do so, however make sure that excess water can drain away easily. You might even want to fill the space between the plastic pot and the terra cotta pot with some insulation material if a hard frost is expected.

## **Planting in Layers**

### **Making layers of bulbs**

**You can plant flower bulbs in layers the - “sandwich” or “lasagne” system - in the garden soil or in pots and containers. The lowest layer will contain the bulbs that flower last, such as tulips. Bulbs that flower earlier such as crocuses or dwarf irises are planted over the later flowering bulbs. Bulbs experience no problems when planted one over another. They simply flower as usual in the same place but at different times. This way, one pot or container can remain in bloom for weeks at a time.**