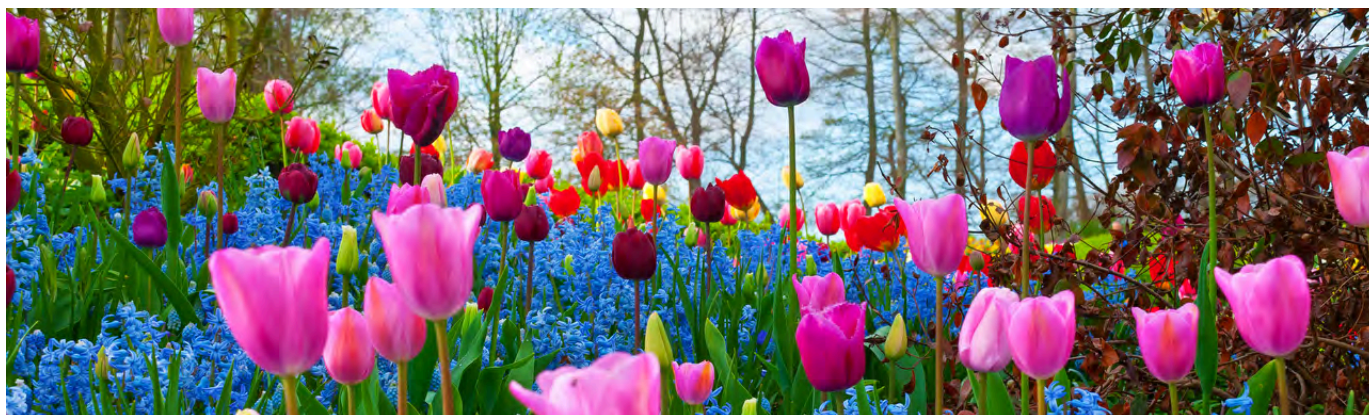


THE OUTSIDER

Illinois Extension Horticulture serving Henry, Mercer, Rock Island, and Stark



PLANTING BULBS

Autumn is a season of change, a transition between the long, hot days of summer to the short, cold days of winter. Tree leaves will change color, and many will be aborted, fields of crops will be harvested, and gardens will be put to bed. While nature is preparing for winter dormancy, autumn is a great time to prepare for springtime flowers. While this may seem counterintuitive, many of our favorite spring blooming plants do best when planting during the fall.

FALL PLANTING FOR SPRING BEAUTY

Spring blooming plants require a unique number of chill hours, or hours spent in dormancy between 32 degrees and 45 degrees F., to initiate bloom production. If planted at the appropriate depth for the species and planted in September or October, Midwestern winters will provide this cooling period naturally.

Knowing how deep a bulb should be planted is based on the size of the bulb. Of course, bulb size varies depending on the species therefore planting depth will also vary. A general rule of thumb is to plant bulbs two to three times deep as the bulb is tall. Small bulbs, such as grape hyacinth, may measure an inch and one-half inch in height while tulip bulbs are larger in comparison, measuring a few inches tall. At planting time, the grape hyacinth will be planted at three to four inches deep and the daffodil will be planted at four to six inches deep.

A little planning and little digging now will be well worth the effort when beautiful blooms emerge in the earliest part of spring. And with proper planning, blooms can be enjoyed from late winter through late spring. To ensure blooms all season, plant a mix of early, mid, and late-season blooming species. Some of the most popular spring blooming species are listed below.



BLOOMS IN EARLY SPRING

- Snowdrops (*Galanthus* spp.) are delicate, nodding white blooms that prefer well-drained soil with partial to full shade. One of the earliest blooming bulbs, it is common and usually harmless for late winter snow to blanket the blooms.
- Crocuses (*Crocus* spp.) are vibrant, cup-shaped blooms that thrive in well-drained soil with full sun to part shade. Crocus are available in a variety of colors including purple, pink, white, gold, and variegated.
- Muscari, (*Muscari armeniacum*) also known as grape hyacinth, produce clusters of small, bell-shaped blue or purple blooms. These petite beauties prefer well drained soil with full to partial sun exposure.
- Hyacinth (*Hyacinth orientalis*) are intensely fragrant spikes of star shaped flowers that do well in well-drained soil in full to part sun. Blooms range in color from pink and purple to white and blue.
- Dwarf iris (*Iris verna*) is a much smaller version of its larger relatives but is equally as stunning. Available in hues of lavender, yellows, whites, and variegated, dwarf iris do well in well-drained soil and full to part sun.



MID-SEASON BLOOMS

- Daffodils (*Narcissus* spp.) are bright, trumpet-shaped flowers that announce spring in hues of sunshine yellows, white, orange, pinks, and corals. The species does well in well-drained soils in full to part sun and will colonize an area over time for an incredible spring show.
- Fritillaria (*Fritillaria* spp.) species offer unique blooms of nodding, bell shaped flowers in a variety of colors including orange, yellow, and purple. A statement in the garden, fritillaria prefers well drained soil in full sun to part shade.



LATE-SEASON BLOOMING SPECIES

- Giant onions (*Allium giganteum*) are a showstopper when they bloom. Large, spherical clusters of star shaped flowers are produced on tall stems that rise above the leaves. Available in a multitude of purple hues, allium prefers well-drained soil in full sun.
- Bearded iris (*Iris germanica*) available nearly every color imaginable and endless combinations, the unique six petal flower, three reaching up and three cascading down. Grown from a rhizome, bearded iris prefers full sun and well-drained soil.
- Peony (*Paeonia* spp.) are long-lived perennials that produce large, rounded blooms in late spring. Fragrant and colorful, peony plants thrive in well-drained soil in full sun to part shade.



OUTSIDER ACTION

Try these activities to be more of an Outsider

- Add a few spring blooming bulbs to your landscape.
- Read *Tulipmania: Money, Honor, and Knowledge in the Dutch Golden Age* by Anne Goldgar.

Don't miss an issue - Sign up for The Outsider to be sent to your email!
@ go.illinois.edu/TheOutsider

SIGN UP NOW



Emily Swihart, Horticulture Educator
Tracy Jo Mulliken, Program Coordinator

321 West 2nd Avenue, Milan, IL 61264
(309) 756-9978
Email: ESwihart@illinois.edu