

Growing Bulbs

True or False



Illinois Extension
UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

Bulbs go into dormancy in late spring and do not start growth until early spring after the chilling period of winter.

FALSE: Bulbs actually start growing roots in late summer or early fall to obtain nutrients and moisture to flower. Bulbs that were planted the previous year resume growing their root systems and add more layers to their bulbs as early as mid-August. At this time, bulbs also are multiplying creating offsets that are also growing roots. Grape hyacinth actually pushes up its foliage while growing roots. These leaves then last through the winter.

The best time to plant bulbs in Zone 5 is October.

TRUE: If planted after October, roots are unable to grow sufficiently. If planted before October, fungus can be an issue in the soil. Fungus like *Fusarium* is more prevalent in warm weather and usually is an issue on new bulbs rather than established plantings. Never plant new bulbs with fungus growth.

Spring bulbs require added phosphorous and calcium in the form of bone meal, at time of planting to promote good root growth.

FALSE: The plant roots' relationship with mycorrhizal fungi may be more efficient in extracting phosphorous than adding bone meal to the soil. Adding bone meal actually prevents organic acid from exuding at root tips preventing the beneficial mycorrhizal fungi from penetrating the roots.



Tulips growing for cut flowers

Bulbs are great in containers.

TRUE: Containers provide good drainage required by spring flowering bulbs. Bigger pots provide more winter protection than smaller ones. Many gardeners use the lasagna method by layering bulbs according to depth and bloom time.

Lasagna Container with Bulbs

- Look on package for depth requirements. Layer allium, daffodils, and crocus.
- Bulbs can be almost touching, add in another 2 inches of soil, then the next set of bulbs. Repeat.
- Fill to the top with soil and water.
- Either keep in garage all winter long and bring out in spring, place in protected location or bring inside if temperatures drops below 28°F but remember snow acts like an insulator.
- After bloom, let foliage ripen and plant in garden.





Spring flowering bulbs will not grow in shade.

FALSE: Grape hyacinth, crocus, winter aconite, snow drops, and Siberian squill can be grown under deciduous trees. Snowdrops and Siberian squill can grow in the shade of evergreens.

Tulip bulbs should be planted 6 to 8 inches below the surface.

FALSE: A study conducted at Cornell University, indicated tulip bulbs should be top planted at the depth of 2 to 4 inches. Bulbs planted deeper than 6 inches had fewer flowers.

Spring bulbs feed bees.

TRUE: Springtime is an important time for bees to feed and make nests. Help native bees by planting spring blooming bulbs.

Bulbs for bees

Snowdrops (*Galanthus*)

Winter Aconite (*Eranthus*)

Crocuses (*Crocus*)

Siberian Squill (*Scillia*)

Glory of the Snow (*Chionodoxa*)

Grape Hyacinth (*Muscari*)

Hyacinth (*Hyacinthus*)

Crown Imperial (*Fritillaria*)

Spanish Bluebells (*Hyacinthoides*)

Ornamental Onions (*Allium*)



Quamash (*Camassia*)

SOURCES

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PHOTOS

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