

### **What are spring planting bulbs?**

Spring planting bulbs are bulbs that should be planted in the spring and bloom in the summer. The number of spring bulbs is quite extensive, but the most popular varieties are as follows: gladiolus, begonias, dahlias, lilies, freesia, anemone, tigridia, acidanthera, montbretia, sparaxis, iris, brodea, liatris, and callas. These bulbs and tubers generally originated from the sub tropical regions of the world such as South Africa and South America. Therefore, they like warm temperatures and humid conditions and are usually not winter hardy.

### **What should I look for when buying spring planting bulbs?**

In general, look for firm and healthy bulbs. Bulbs that are mushy usually have not been kept in a cool dry place and will rot and therefore not flower. When buying tubers, look for tubers with 3 to 5 eyes and initial root formation.

### **When should I plant my bulbs?**

Spring planting, summer flowering bulbs and tubers can be planted in the spring when you are certain the ground will no longer freeze in your area. This may be up until the end of May depending on your area.

### **How deep should I plant spring planting bulbs?**

The rule of thumb is to plant the bulb or tuber about 5 inches deep. Except for Dahlias and Begonias which should be planted just beneath the surface.

### **How far apart do I plant spring planting bulbs?**

For smaller varieties, 4 inches is a good interval, 5 inches apart for gladiolus and 10 inches for begonias. While lilies should be about 12 inches apart and dahlias as much as 16 inches apart. For uninterrupted color, they can be planted even closer together.

### **What do I do after my bulbs have bloomed?**

Once your bulbs have finished blooming, they can often be used again the following year. With the exception of lilies, the bulbs have to be taken out of the ground if it freezes in your area during the winter. If it does freeze in your area, let the leaves die down naturally, then dig up the bulbs and store in a cool dry place and replanted the following spring.

We can barely contain ourselves. We wait patiently for the first sign, we look for it in any day that gives us sunshine and temperatures above 30 degrees. Then, in one burst, it arrives and we find ourselves buying flats of color and pots of cheery spring. Sometimes we're left looking for something new to celebrate the rights of Spring and we're on the look out for the next new plant. Given our tendency to want to break out of spring with big flowers and lots of color we have a tendency to overlook one major group of

plants, the summer bulbs.

Usually, the time we remember we wanted to plant them is in the summer when farmer's markets and florists are selling big blooming bunches of dahlias or gladiolus. We remember them when we're at the county fairs and see blue ribbons on dazzling dahlias that are as big as dinner plates and seem to explode out of their pots. It's almost like it's a best kept secret offered to only a select few who can look beyond the peat moss and find a package of bulbs or rhizomes that will erupt in color during the summer.

But we'll let you in on the secret. They're easy to plant, easy to grow, easy to overwinter and easy to enjoy! These great performers have been around for centuries and plants with that kind of staying power have to meet with the approval of thousands of gardeners and have to perform well year after year in a multitude of climates. Bulbs like gladiolus, dahlias, begonias, caladiums, canna lilies, oriental lilies and calla lilies all can be incorporated into an existing perennial bed or in containers. They add size and status to any garden and can be kept overwinter to provide more bang the next year. Not only that, but many of them multiply over the summer so you end up with more plants the next year.