

### About bulbs

Bulbs are a great way to get some spring colour in the garden, specially when grown in containers. They can take up little room and provide a long display of colour if planted in layers. This will give you a display which can last for weeks, or even months.

Most bulbs need relatively little room to grow and flower well. They will have already built up all the energy they need in the bulb from the year before. Watering is essential, of course, in dry autumns and spring pots will not catch much rainwater so it's important to water well at least once a week. In a large pot, you can put seven or eight different types of flowering bulb in layers, a bit like a lasagne, to give you fantastic colours and interest.

### Planting

Before planting make sure the bulbs are free of mould, and are not soft. Just gently squeeze the bulb: if it's hard, then its fine. But if it's a bit spongy or moisture comes from it, then through it away. Clean the pot or container before use and make sure there are no slugs or snails lurking in dark corners.

Always wear gloves when planting bulbs and wash your hands afterwards. Some bulbs like Hyacinth can be irritating ot the skin and all bulbs could be toxic to animals and children.

If you don't want to plant the bulbs straight away, place them in a paper bag (with a label if loose) and put them somewhere dry and cool.

To coordinate the flowering of the bulbs together, is an art in itself. Different types of tulips, daffodils and hyacinths can flower at different times so it's worth reading the information about each carefully. Also be aware that bulbs flower at different heights. For instance daffodils can be as small as 15cm and others up to 50cm.

### Planting in pots

When planting bulbs in pots, it's important to follow the rule that the pot must be as deep as the height of the tallest bulb. Always 'crock' the bottom of the pot for drainage. This means putting a layer of broken pot, polystyrene (about 2.5cm square) or even stones/pebbles in the bottom of the pot or container.

Use a compost (not soil from the garden) mixed with some coarse grit and put a layer of 10cm on top of the crock. Put in the layer of bulbs (the right way up!), quite close together (about 1cm apart), and cover them just to the top of the bulb. Add the next layer until you have reached 20cm from the top of the pot or container. Finally, add a layer of compost about 15cm deep. The general rule is for larger bulbs planted at the bottom and smaller at the top, although Hyacinths are often best planted at the top!

Shallow pots (or 'pans'), only about 10cm deep can be used. They are especially good for ledges or



# Advice Sheet

## Spring bulbs in containers continued

window boxes, somwehther they can be seen close. Crocus, rhodohypoxis, cyclamen, albuca, tolbaghia, or Isis reticulata will do well in these. If you place them on the ground, then a group of them together work well, but be careful of the dreaded slugs and snails! A layer of washed grit on top can help deter them and look good too. Old sinks work well too, along with some alpine plants.

### Enhancing the pot display

To enhance the display, other plants can be added ot the top of the pot. Some grasses look particularly good, Acorus 'Ogon', Carex morowii variegata, Carex testacea (nice red leaves), Ophiopogon planiscapus 'Nigrescens' (black leaves) to name a few. Small-leaved variegated ivies, ajugas and lamiums all have interesting coloured foliage, which can trail over the pot and look good.

Winter flowering pansies and violas come in many colours and can help coordinate a display.

Once the display has finished, some of the bulbs can be replanted in the garden. If you want to replant them, leave all bulbs for at least 6 weeks after flowering to build up some energy for the following year's display. Feeding the bulbs weekly after flowering can help with a potash based fertilizer. Bulbs that can be naturalised include crocus, daffodils, fritillaria, alliums, chinodoxa, and irises. Bulbs that don't respond well are hyacinths and tulips, but there is nothing to stop you trying!

### Bulbs ideal for growing in pots

Here are a few of our recommendations:

#### Tulips

Small varieties, earlier flowering:

Diana, Pinocchio, China Town, Fly Away, Little Beauty, Red Riding Hood, Showwinner, Uncle Tom, Yokohama

Larger later varieties:

China Pink, Oriental Beauty, Angelique, Anraciet, Queen of Marvel, Queen of Night, Paul Scherer, Peach Blossom, Brown Sugar, Apricot Beauty, Ballerina, Black Hero

#### Daffodils (narcissus)

Small varieties:

Pueblo, Baby Moon, New Baby, Hawera, Topolino, Thalia

Scented varieties:

Geranium, Cheerfulness, Winston Churchill

#### Small Bulbs

Anemones, Muscari Latifolium, Chionodoxa, Crocus, Iris reticulate varieties, Fritillaria, Raninculus

#### Hyacinth

Some of our favourites - Blue Jacket, Purple Sensation, Woodstock, Apricot Passion, Woodstock, City of Harlem, Delft Blue, Royal Navy

### For further help and advice

Please come into the nursery (with pictures if you have them) and we will be happy to advise you further, or ask your question on Facebook.

