

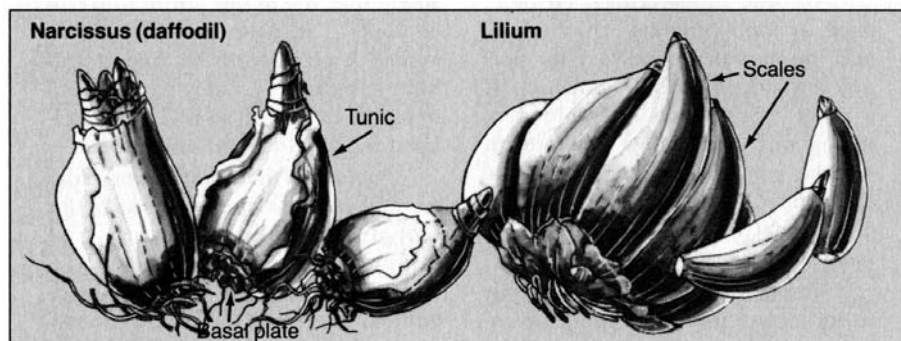
Dividing Bulbs

By Kate Honders, Cuddebackville Master Gardener

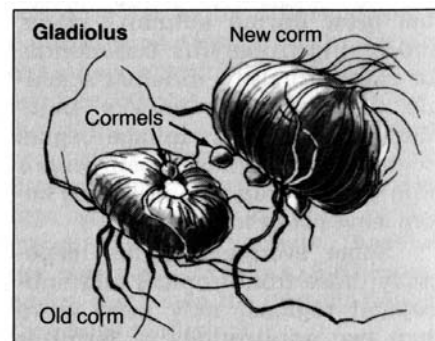
Most bulbs reward a gardener's care by forming new bulbs, called "offsets," which can be detached to establish new plantings. Some bulbs increase so slowly that they seldom need to be dug up and divided. But there are many others that proliferate at a rather amazing rate, and they need to be divided in

order to relieve overcrowding that can result in reduced performance.

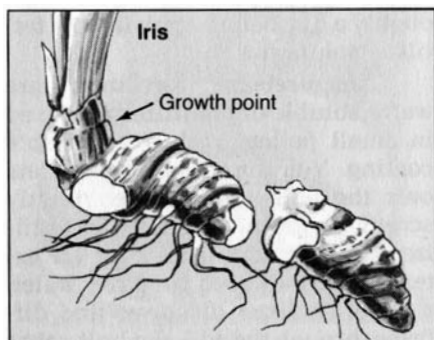
Dividing needs to be done when the bulb is in dormancy, so fall is the best time to dig up your bulbs, divide and re-plant them. The illustrations on this page show the proper method for dividing each "bulb" type.



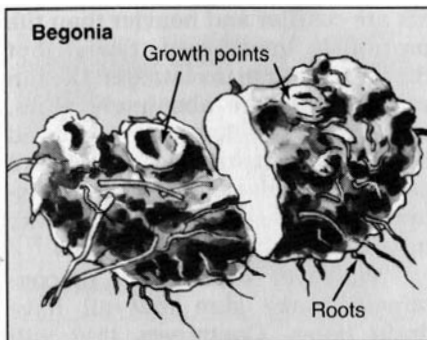
True bulbs separate into individual plants still connected to a common base. To divide, carefully break apart connected bulbs at base. Lilies can increase in a similar manner, carefully remove outer scales.



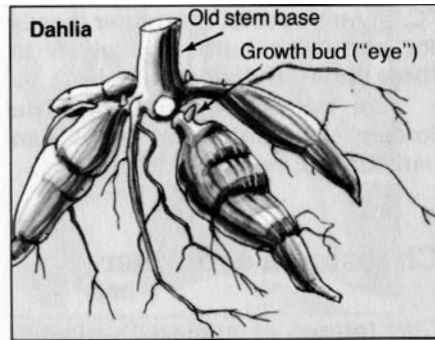
Corms renew themselves each growing season by forming small corms and cormels on top of old corms. To divide separate them from the old corm.



Rhizomes produce new plants from growth points along their sides. To divide, break at natural "waists" between sections, making sure each has at least one growth point.

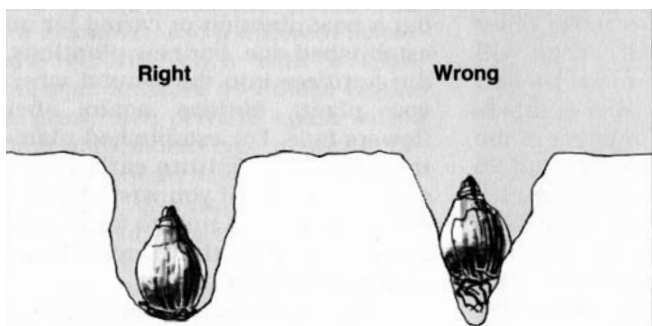


Tubers increase in size and number of growing points, but don't separate into more plants. To divide, cut large tubers into 2 or more sections each with one or more growth points.

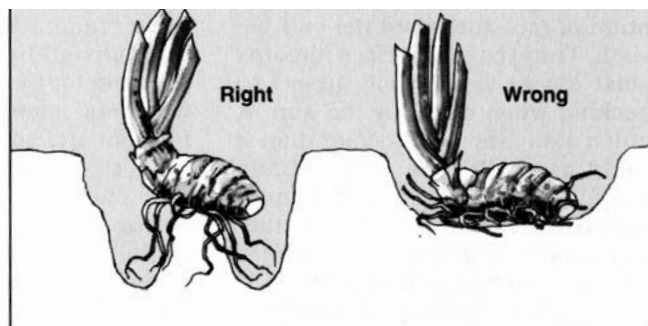


Tuberous roots form multiple growth points. To divide, cut apart so each separated root has a growth bud.

Proper Planting Techniques



Good root growth depends on firm contact between the bulb and the soil for bulbs that are rootless at planting time, dig a wide based hole and set bulb on soil.

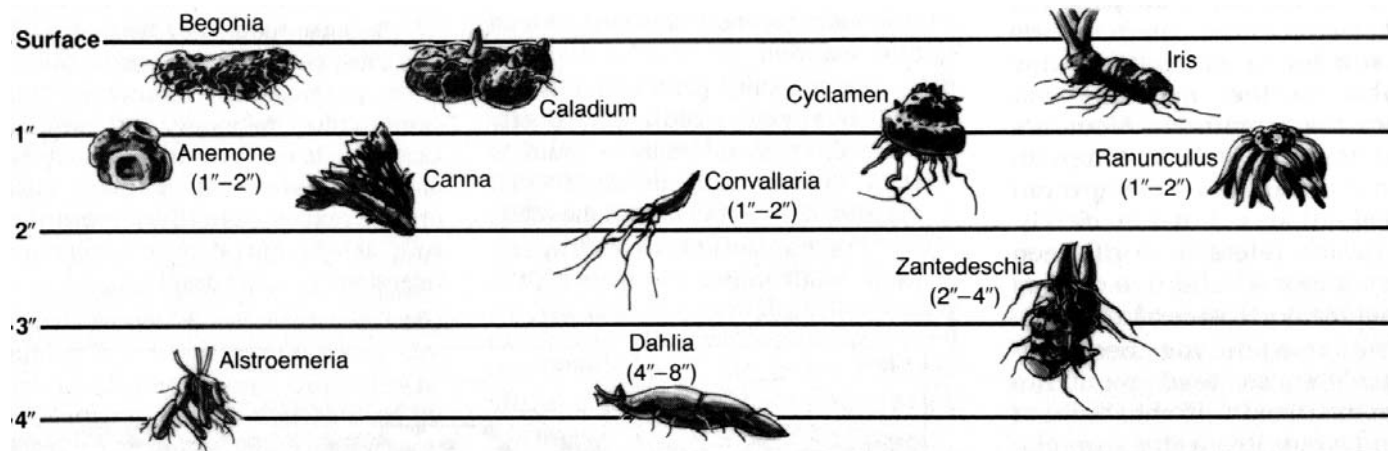


For bulbs with roots, make a ridge of soil and spread roots downward.

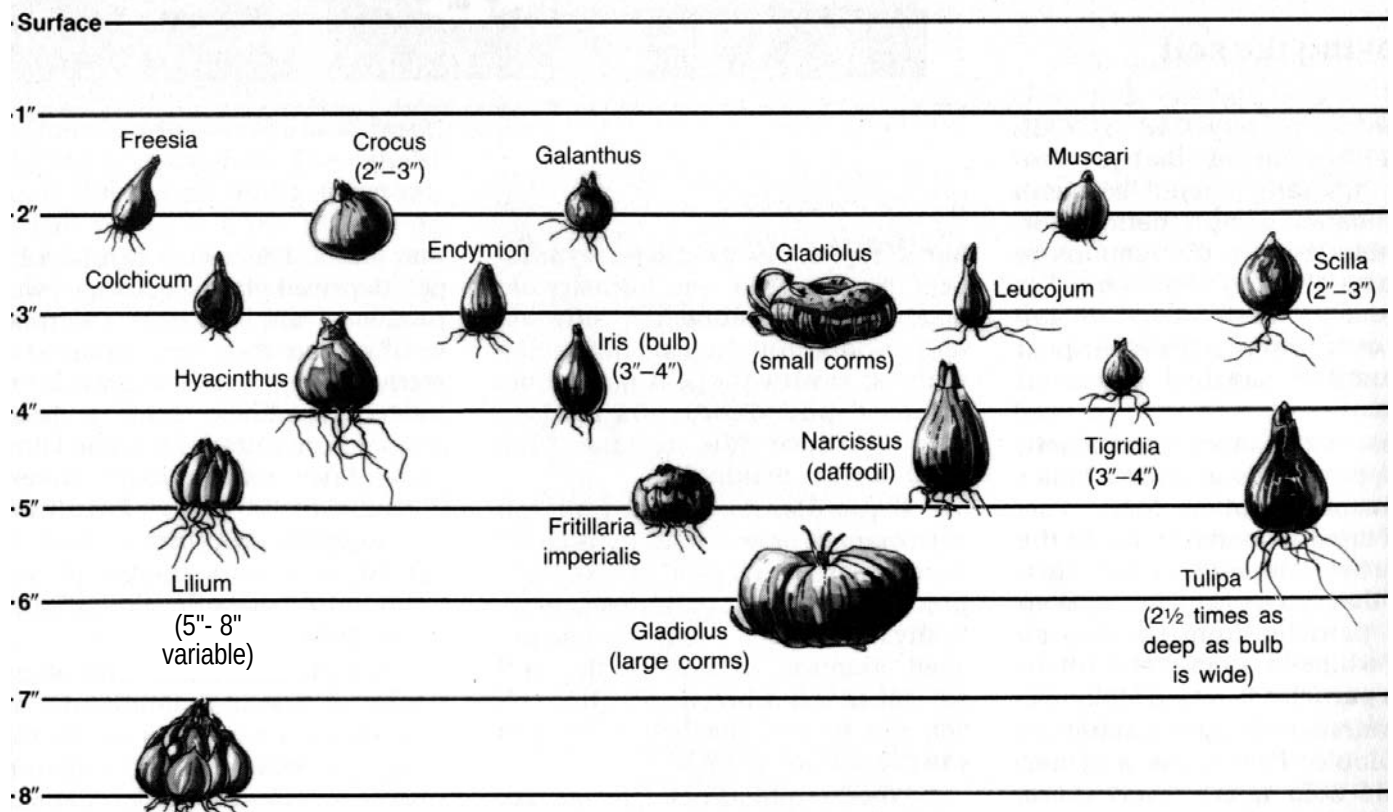


Planting Depths for Popular Bulbs

Tubers, Rhizomes & Tuberous Roots



True Bulbs and Corms





Companion Plants for your Bulbs

By Gerda Krogslund, Middletown Master Gardener

Bulbs are the easiest plants to grow and give so much variety and pleasure to the gardener with so little effort. Most people associate bulbs with spring, but there are bulbs that flower through the summer, fall, and even during the winter months. Many bulbs make excellent container plants for those who need a winter pick-me-up or people who have no yards.

Bulbs will look more natural if you plant them in clumps or groups, not in straight lines. Mass planting of bulbs that flower through winter and early spring under deciduous trees can turn what might otherwise be a somewhat dull area of the garden into a lovely feature. Although it is sometimes difficult to dig and plant in these areas, as the soil is hard and full of matted roots, the result can be well worth the effort. The leaves that fall from the trees in fall break down into leaf mold which provides ideal growing conditions for the bulbs. If the bulbs have been planted in clumps, you may be able to plant annuals between the clumps, using either seed or seedlings. Quick growers such as Virginian stock (*Malcolmia*) will provide a pretty distraction from the dying bulb foliage.

Bulbs mix well with many perennials, as the new growth of the perennials tends to camouflage the not-so-attractive foliage of the bulbs as it yellows and dies off. Hardy annuals sown in the fall will also serve the same purpose. Plant your bulbs and bedding plants at the same time, placing a bulb between each of the plants. For example, yellow tulips and blue forget-me-nots (*Myosotis*) or white primulas with Anemones and narcissus work well together.

Many bulbs look nicely together. Tulips planted with low-growing grape hyacinths fill in otherwise bare patches. Tulips, daffodils and crown imperial (*Fritillaria*) can be combined with perennials such as columbine (*Aquilegia*). Variegated hosta planted with narcissus are compatible and hide the dead daffodil foliage. A mass of tulips planted and then followed by another mass of irises extends the blooms from spring into summer.

Thinking ahead to summer and planning your garden beds, iris look well with perennials such as foxglove (*Digitalis*), penstemon, delphinium, Oriental poppy (*Papaver orientale*) and annual alyssum (*Lobularia*). Another outstanding summer flower is the daylily (*Hemerocallis*). Daylilies make a dramatic statement all alone or with some perennials such as phlox, salvia, Russian Sage (*Perovskia*), and evening primrose (*Oenothera*). Combine Asiatic Lilies with larkspurs, yarrow (*Achillea*), Artemisia, black-eyed Susan (*Rudbeckia*), roses, ornamental grasses, asters, or Alstromeria. Combine Oriental Lilies with Cosmos, Coreopsis, Veronica, globe thistle (*Echinops*), Liatris, or coneflower (*Echinacea*). For a dramatic impact, plant Canna with coleus or elephant ears. Dahlias flower from midsummer into fall and look wonderful by themselves in a cutting garden. Crocosmias harmonize with sneezeweed (*Heleniums*), goldenrods (*Solidago*), salvias, black-eyed Susan (*Rudbeckia*) and dahlias. There are so many choices; you can experiment with color and different plants.

If you would like some color for the December holidays, October is the perfect time to plant your Amaryllis bulb in an indoor container. No matter what time of year it is, it is always time to see some beautiful blooms from your bulbs.

Forcing Spring-Flowering Bulbs Indoors

By Jody Donnelly, New Hampton Master Gardener

Nothing can brighten your home (and mood) on a dreary winter day better than a beautiful display of fresh spring blooming bulbs. Forcing bulbs is not difficult. Depending on the type of bulbs you plant, with a little planning and improvising you can have showy blooms all winter long.

Any 4-6 inch deep container with drainage is suitable. Label the pots with forcing date, cultivar name, color and date of potting. For most bulbs, fill containers $\frac{3}{4}$ full with moist potting soil. Place bulbs on top so their tips are even with the pot rim. Fill in around the bulbs with soil, then water thoroughly.

Next, chill bulbs for 10-16 weeks at temperatures between 35-50° F. An unheated garage or shed, a spare refrigerator or under a pile of mulch or leaves in the backyard will work well. Water several times while they chill.

When pale shoots emerge, move pots to a cool, dim area until shoots turn green and then move to a bright warm

room (65-70° F). Flowers will soon appear. Water lightly every day or so to keep soil moist (not wet) because stems will flop with over watering.

After the flowers are finished, you can plant the bulbs in your garden if they are hardy in your area. Cut the flowers as they fade and continue watering until they can be moved outdoors.

Some of the best bulbs for forcing are:

Tulips - 14-16 weeks chill time depending on cultivar.

Daffodils - 15 weeks (except Paperwhites which need no cooling).

Hyacinths - 11-14 weeks.

Crocus - 15 weeks.

Start the process in the beginning of September for January blooms, late September/early October for February blooms and November for March and April blooms. This way you can ensure a houseful of beautiful blooms all winter long.



Bulb Buying Tips

By Kate Honders, Cuddebackville Master Gardener

A bulb's performance depends on the care the plant received in the previous season, so your bulb-growing success depends on the grower and vendor of the bulbs you buy. Purchase good quality stock: bulbs grown, stored and shipped under ideal conditions. In other words, you can't expect first-rate performance from second-rate bulbs.

Look for

- ◆ Plump, firm bulbs
- ◆ Bulbs available at proper planting time

Avoid buying

- ◆ Shriveled or lightweight bulbs
- ◆ Soft or squishy bulbs
- ◆ Bulbs obviously damaged in digging
- ◆ Moldy bulbs or those with discolorations that aren't part of the natural appearance

Timing of bulb purchases is of great importance.

In general, bulb sellers make bulbs available at their best planting times. Try to purchase and plant bulbs as soon as they are available. Remember that some retailers may keep bulbs on the shelf for a period of time. Always examine end-of-season sale bulbs carefully.

Battle of the Bulb

By Ranny Marvinney Dykstra, Warwick Master Gardener

Twenty-four years ago, when we bought our little piece of paradise, I had grand ideas for lush perennial flower beds and bountiful vegetable gardens. Little did I realize that our 5-acre wood was the sanctuary of many different creatures who also looked forward to lush perennial beds and bountiful vegetable gardens!

Over the ensuing years I have had battles with my feathered, furred and 6-legged neighbors. Some stakes I claimed and other skirmishes were conceded. But the one war that I ultimately waved the white flag of defeat over was the ongoing Battle of the Bulb.

Yes, our rodent friends enjoy a repast of digging up freshly planted bulbs and tossing them aside after a nibble or two. A day after diligently covering large swaths of your garden or woods with spring flowering bulbs you will invariably see that the equally diligent squirrel has arisen early to check out each newly dug hole. How does a gardener win such a battle?

A promising method of control is the concept of caging your bulbs when initially planting. The idea is to use metal wire, such as chicken fencing to foil the rodents. Some people purchase cages made just for

this purpose, while others make homemade versions.

Cut a 12" length of 36"-wide wire sporting 1" holes and curl it into a cylinder. Twist the ends together to maintain form. Cut a 12" square of wire for the bottom; twist ends to secure. You now have a basket that can be lowered into the hole you've dug. Shovel some soil in the very bottom, followed by placement of about 6-8 medium sized bulbs, and soil. Loosely place another 12" square over the top. Completely cover with soil.

