

Bulbous Plants for Indoor Bloom

Bulbs can be forced into bloom indoors long before flowers appear outside. Both hardy bulbs and tender bulbs can be brought into flower if they are given proper treatment.

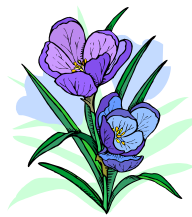
Hardy bulbs include tulips, hyacinths, narcissus, daffodils, iris, snowdrops, grape hyacinths, glory of the snow, and scillas. All of these, and corms of crocuses, are given the same treatment.

Tender bulbs include the amaryllis and paper white narcissus. These bulbs require special treatment.

Selecting the bulbs.

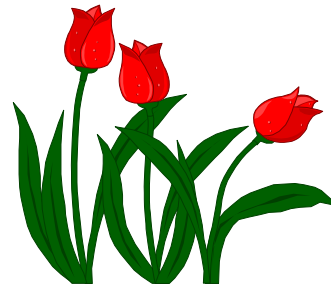
Bulbs that are good for indoor flowering:

- Crocuses
- Hyacinths
- Grape hyacinths
- Darwin tulips
- Triumph tulips
- Large, medium & short daffodils



Bulbs *not* generally good for indoor flowering:

- Species tulips (including Fosteriana, Red Emperor)
- Scilla hispanica
- May-flowering cottage tulips
- Parrot tulips



Use flowering size bulbs.

For indoor blooming, purchase only flowering size bulbs. Bargains in bulbs should be avoided; such bargains often prove to be bulbs not large enough to flower. You will be surer of success with tulip bulbs over one and a half inches in diameter than with smaller bulbs.

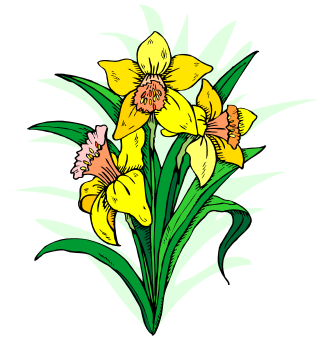
Some varieties for forcing.

Daffodils. Carlton, yellow
Cheerfulness, white
Golden Harvest, yellow

King Alfred, yellow
Thalia, white
Twink, primrose and orange

Hyacinths. Bismarck, light blue
City of Haarlem, yellow
Edelweiss, white

La Victoire, rose
L' Innocence, white
Pink Pearl, pink



Tulips.

Bartigon, red
City of Haarlem, scarlet
Prince of Austria, orange/red

White Sail, white
William Pitt, red



Figure 2. Hyacinth bulb being forced in "hyacinth glass"

Figure 1. Tulip bulbs properly planted for forcing

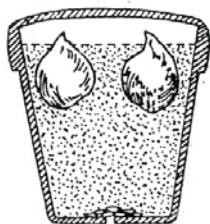
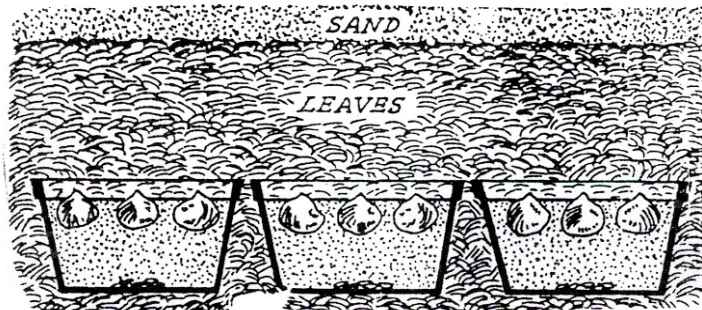


Figure 3. Potted bulbs placed for cold storage treatment outdoors



Treatment for hardy bulbs.

Plant hardy bulbs in late October in regular flowerpots or in bulb pots. (Bulb pots are shorter than regular flowerpots.) Leave them in a cool (40° F to 50°F) dark place for at least six weeks. Then bring them gradually into warmer, lighter conditions.

Potting the bulbs.

- Mix equal amounts (by volume) of sand (the size used for concrete work is very good), garden soil, and peat moss. Bulbs grow satisfactorily in this well drained mixture. No fertilizer is needed.
- Put a one-inch layer of chips, little pebbles, or gravel in the bottom of the pot. This material provides good drainage.
- Add the mixture of sand, garden soil and peat moss to the pot. Put enough for the bulb to set properly (see #4).
- Place the bulbs in the pot. Plant them in the following ways.
 - a. **Tulips.** Set three bulbs in a five-inch pot. (A five-inch pot has a five-inch inside diameter at the rim.) Place the bulbs so that their tops will show above the soil line. Keep the flat side of the tulip bulb toward the wall of the pot. The lower leaf grows from this side of the bulb.
 - b. **Hyacinths.** Put three or four bulbs in a seven-inch pot or plant one bulb in a four-inch flowerpot. Allow only the tops of the bulbs to show above the soil line. Hyacinths also can be grown in water in a hyacinth glass (Figure 2). This is a container devised to hold the bulb so that only the base of the bulb is in water. Keep bulbs to be grown in glasses in a cool, dry place. Put them in the glasses in early December. No soil is needed for such a container.
 - c. **Daffodils and narcissus.** Plant three or four bulbs in a seven-inch pot with one-half of the bulb showing above the top of the soil.
 - d. **Crocuses, snowdrops, grape hyacinths and other small bulbs.** Place several of these in a pot, leaving some space between them. Set them so they will be one inch below the soil surface.
- Firm the soil around the bulbs. Make sure there is no soil within a half-inch of the top of the pot. This will prevent overflow when you water the bulb.
- Water the soil until some water flows through the hole in the bottom of the pot.

Cold Storage.

To break dormancy and start growth, hardy bulbs require cold storage at a temperature of 40°F. to 50°F. Bury potted bulbs out-of-doors in leaves, and cover the leaves with sand or well-leached cinders (figure 3). Potted bulbs can be buried in soil, but it is difficult to remove them in January when the soil is frozen.

Instead of putting the bulbs in cold storage outside, you may store them in a dark basement or room (such as a vegetable cellar) if the temperature does not go over 50°F. To prevent tops from growing too much during storage, keep bulbs at 40°F. rather than 50°F.

Success with forcing hardy bulbs depends upon their developing roots during the cold storage period. Leave the pots of bulbs in cold storage at least until the first week in January. Then bring pots of bulbs indoors as desired.

Indoor Treatment for Blooming.

Once you remove bulbs from cold storage, put them in a partly shaded location with a cool, spring like growing temperature of 60°F. to 65°F. as soon as possible. *Do not* put them, in a hot living room, or near a radiator or register. Leave them in this location until the shoots begin to show green color. Gradually move them to more and more light until they receive high light intensity. Good locations for growing the bulbs to flowering stage are a sun porch or a bedroom window.

Good light, a cool temperature, and regular watering allow the flowers to develop slowly and fully.

How to get a series of bloom.

To have flowers over a period of time, remove hardy bulbs from cold storage at two-week intervals. New bulbs will come into flower when others are past their prime. To do this, you must keep bulbs at about 40°F. in cold storage. Tops do not grow actively at this temperature.

Treatment of tender bulbs.

Tender bulbs do not require cold storage treatment.

Paper-white narcissus are good for only one blooming period. Grow them in any medium (sand, gravel, pebbles, or soil) that will hold the bulbs upright. Place them in bowls or low pots, and set them immediately in a well-lighted location at 60°F. Temperatures of 75°F. or more are *undesirable* for they encourage weak growth and loss of flower.

Amaryllis is potted in the wintertime. Put one bulb in a pot, allowing an inch of space around the bulb. Leave the upper half of the bulb showing above the soil line. Give these plants good light, a good supply of water, and temperatures above 60 degrees F. They will flower within six to eight weeks. Once they have flowered, keep watering the plants. Amaryllis does better if the foliage is left on the plant and the plant kept growing year 'round.

Chemung 5/1989

Updated 11/1999