



# Spring Bulbs Top Tips

## Where to plant bulbs?

Spring flowering bulbs have developed in very different habitats and so will only thrive in similar conditions in your garden.

### Damp and shady

Our native **daffodils** and **bluebells** naturally grow in shady, damp woodland areas – flowering in April and May respectively before the trees develop their leaf canopy. So these bulbs are happy in clayey wet soil and will not be eaten by passing squirrels and rabbits, as they are toxic to them.

### Damp and sunny

**Snake's head fritillary** grows wild at woodland edges and damp meadows so thrives in damp soil in sun or partial shade.

### Dry and shady

**Snowdrops** can cope with shade but usually prefer drier soil as they typically grow in hedgerows. Try to planting these in February/March while they are 'in the green' (fresh bulbs with leaves intact) just after flowering. These will establish a lot better than dry bulbs.

### Well drained and sunny

**Tulips** grow on mountain sides in their own countries and so will prefer similar well-drained and sunny spots in your garden. In damp soil you may get a good show for a year or two but may have to re-plant regularly to guarantee flowers. Alternatively you could plant them in containers with plenty of grit or sharp sand and put them in a sunny spot. This may also help you to protect them from mice, squirrels and rabbits who are all partial to tulip bulbs.

**Iris reticulata** like similar conditions to tulips and may also struggle in cold, wet winter soil.



## How to plant bulbs

Remember that more is more with bulbs! They look their best grouped together either in the ground or in containers. For very small bulbs such as snowdrops or Chionodoxa group at least 8 together for a good show. Smaller daffodils and tulips should be planted in a group of 5 or 6 and larger ones in 3. This method of planting will also save you time as you can dig a larger hole and plant the bulbs more quickly.

### Planting in borders

Position all the bulbs first, in groups of 3, 5 etc. in between the existing plants and shrubs. This is to ensure you get an even display across the border. You should put small bulbs nearer the front and larger bulbs in the middle or back.

Then dig holes for the bulbs – these should be 2 and a half times the height of the bulbs – so a 5cm high bulb needs a 12.5cm deep hole. Give your hole a flat base and space out the bulbs evenly. If the bulbs prefer a well-drained soil you could add some grit or sharp sand to the bottom of the hole before planting. Ensure the bulbs are pointing upwards with the roots at the bottom.

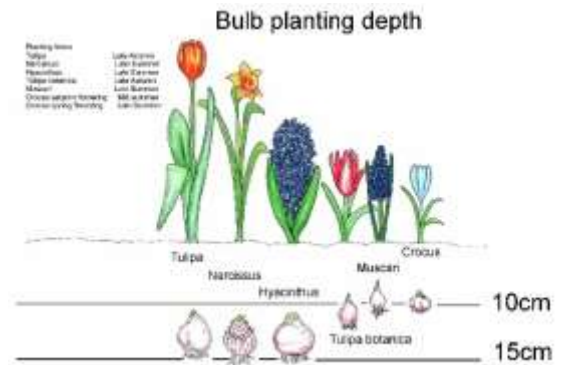
Fill in the hole with broken up soil mixed with compost and light firm down the soil. You should not have to fertilise at this stage as the bulbs contain nutrients, but water them if the soil is dry.

### Planting in turf

Position groups of bulbs across the lawn. Then cut out a section of turf and dig down the correct depth and then re-fill and fold back the turf; tread it down firmly.

### Planting in pots

As the photograph shows you should build up your winter/spring container by planting your bulbs at the correct depth under the compost and then planting some winter-flowering bedding plants on top such as Violas, Primulas, Ivy, Ajuga etc. Your bulbs will emerge through the other plants in the spring. You will need to add slow release fertiliser to the pots as there are a lot of plants in small space! I leave my bulbs in their pots when they've finished flowering and just replace the bedding plants for the summer.



January



Snowdrop



*Iris reticulata*

February



*Chionodoxa forbesii*



Crocus 'Blue Pearl'

## March



Species Tulip



Daffodil 'Jeffire' and Grape Hyacinth/Muscari

## April and May



Snake's head fritillary



Daffodil 'Thalia'



Daffodil 'Golden Ducat'



Tulips 'Queen of the Night' and 'Shirley'