

RGA Gardening Fact Sheet #1: *Fall Bulbs*

Gardening enhances our personal and community space. All plants, from trees to flowers, beautify our living area, provide edible food and offer environmental benefits ranging from the oxygen we breathe to creating summer shade to cool our homes. By growing plants, we better appreciate our natural environment and the ecological relationships between soil, water and climate. Gardening helps the young to the young-at-heart understand the responsible use and protection of our natural environment, as well as the impact we have on the "big picture" of environmental stewardship.

With support from the **Conexus Credit Union's (CCU) Community Investment Program**, the **Regina Garden Associates (RGA)** at the **Regina Floral Conservatory** aim to promote environmental stewardship through a series of gardening fact sheets, teaching appreciation of growing plants and basic gardening practices to the general public. Visit the Regina Floral Conservatory often and continue learning about gardening through our fact sheets.

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Gardeners routinely think ahead to the promise of the next season and plant bulbs in the fall to enjoy early spring blooms. Referring to bulbs in the broadest sense, they actually comprise a group made up of true bulbs, corms, tubers and rhizomes.



Allium (genus Allium)
true bulb



Crocus (genus Crocus)
corm



Daffodils (genus Narcissus)
true bulb



Iris (genus Iris)
rhizome



Grape Hyacinth (genus Muscari)
true bulb



Tulips (genus Tulipa)
true bulb

Choosing Bulbs

Bulbs can be purchased through local gardening outlets or by seed catalogue. Tulips are the most popular bulbs. Colour combinations are endless, plant heights differ, there is a broad range of flowering period/time and even the foliage can be colourful. Regardless of bulb type, the hardest part of bulb planting is simply paring down the choice of bulbs to purchase.



Using Bulbs in Your Garden

Use bulbs both in formal beds and mixed herbaceous and shrub borders. For formal beds, plant bulbs in larger masses so as to create a strong visual appeal by way of a single color, type and flowering period. In the mixed border, informal groupings of bulbs of the same type offer early color and help fill spaces between perennial flowers and shrubs just beginning to grow.

Be sure to plant in large groups or smaller groups of odd numbers of a minimum of five. Much larger established groups of bulbs that have survived many seasons are referred to as naturalized when they have multiplied in numbers and spread beyond the original planting location.



Planting Bulbs

Bulbs can be planted as long as the ground is not frozen, however, September is typically ideal. Bulbs are easy to plant. The hole is small and rather shallow. It is easier yet if the soil has been rototilled or loosened. The location should be free of pooling spring water and the soil should be rich in organic matter. Mixing peat moss, composted manure or compost into the soil will provide a good home for new healthy bulbs.

Bulbs are generally planted three times deeper than the actual bulb height, with the pointed end facing up, spaced two to three times their width apart, and located where there is a minimum of six hours of direct sunlight per day. Remarkably, the bulb will grow if accidentally planted upside down, but it will take longer. Lightly pack the soil over the bulbs, water generously and walk away! Next spring, you will see the fruits of your fall labour when green shoots start to break through the surface of the soil.

Planting bulbs in pots is not desirable and considered risky. It can be attempted if the pot is sunk into the ground over the winter or generously wrapped in insulation and stored in an unheated shed/garage or balcony. Doing so protects it from detrimental spring thaw/freeze cycles. The pot can be lifted from the soil once spring is fully underway.



Bulb Care

When the flowers are finished blooming, remove the old flower head and leave the foliage to die back on its own. It is important to avoid watering the bulbs once they have gone into this dormant stage. This is the stage when the bulb is gathering every available nutrient to increase its reserves for an equally, if not more, magnificent bloom show the following year. In these subsequent years, it is especially necessary to fertilize the bulbs by topdressing with compost, composted manure or a slow-release bulb fertilizer to maintain bloom counts.