

The most frequently asked questions about flower bulbs

1. When should I plant flower bulbs?

Spring-flowering bulbs such as tulips, daffodils and hyacinths are planted in the autumn, from September to December, before the first ground frost. Summer-flowering bulbs such as dahlias and calla lilies are planted in the spring as soon as there is no risk of ground frost anymore.

2. How do I plant flower bulbs?

- First, loosen the soil with a spade at the place where you want to plant the flower bulbs. This makes the soil easier to work.
- Dig a hole with a spade or bulb planter.
- Then plant the flower bulbs in it with their pointed sides facing up.
- Fill the hole with the previously removed soil and tamp the surface gently.

3. How far apart should I plant the bulbs, and how deep should I plant them?

There is an easy way to remember how to do this. Keep a distance of three times the diameter of the bulb between the bulbs, and use three times the height of the bulb as the planting depth. Tulips that are 5 centimetres in diameter and height should thus be planted at a depth of 15 centimetres and 15 centimetres apart.

4. Can I plant flower bulbs in pots?

Flower bulbs will perform perfectly in pots. Just be sure that the pot is deep enough (at least three times the height of the bulb) and that it has a hole in the bottom to allow excess water to drain out.

- For proper drainage, put a layer of old pot shards, expanded clay pellets or gravel in the bottom of the pot.
- Scatter a layer of potting compost over the pot shards, expanded clay pellets or gravel.
- Plant the flower bulbs in the potting compost. For a colourful result, use lots of flower bulbs. They can be planted closer together in a pot than in the garden so keep the distance between them no greater than the diameter of the bulb.
- Put a layer of potting compost on top of the bulbs and tamp it down firmly.
- The last step is to provide some water.
- Make sure that the pots are protected from severe frost by wrapping them in straw or bubble-wrap. You could also place them in a shed during the coldest months when temperatures drop below freezing.

5. What is lasagne planting?

Lasagne planting (also called 'layered planting') is a special way of planting flower bulbs. It involves planting flower bulbs in layers, one over the next, just as you would make lasagne. The bulbs that will flower latest in the season are placed in the bottom layer, and the ones that will flower earliest are put in the top layer. Since the flower bulbs are planted in layers according to their flowering sequence, the earliest to bloom such as crocuses, will emerge first. These will then be followed by the flower bulbs that will bloom later such as hyacinths or tulips. This successive flowering means that you can enjoy the results for a long time: from January until May, depending on the kinds of bulbs you plant.

6. What kind of soil do flower bulbs need?

Actually, flower bulbs will grow and bloom in any kind of soil as long as it provides good drainage. During their first year, fertilising is unnecessary because all the nutrients they need to grow are contained in the flower bulbs themselves.

7. Should I water the flower bulbs after I plant them?

Water the spring-flowering bulbs immediately after planting them. This encourages them to grow roots. The sooner the roots develop, the better the flower bulb can tolerate cold and even freezing temperatures. Flower bulbs in pots will also need water during the period following planting because the soil in the pots dries out quicker at that time. Summer-flowering bulbs need even more water just after planting. Keep the soil in the garden or in the pots/plant containers moist after planting the bulbs.

8. Will my flower bulbs come up again next year?

Flower bulbs are divided into three groups: annuals, perennials and naturalising bulbs. Annual bulbs will produce their most beautiful display during the first year after planting and will also emerge the next year. Over time, they will no longer flower at all. Perennial bulbs will emerge and continue to bloom year after year. Naturalising bulbs will also emerge every year but will also increase in number.

9. Can I store flower bulbs?

It is best to plant your flower bulbs as soon as you can. If this isn't possible, you could store your flower bulbs for a little while in a cool dry place such as a garage or cellar. Check them often, however, to see if any fungus is growing on the flower bulbs as a result of high humidity. If this happens, the best thing to do is to let your flower bulbs become dry to the touch and then plant them immediately.