

Time to plant bulbs in the garden

Written by Holyoke Enterprise

Bulbs enhance your garden in a carefree way. Plant them at the proper time and they provide years of pleasure without much effort.

What kind of bulbs do best in eastern Colorado? Daffodils, snowdrops, squill, lilies and tulips are the best for this area. Hyacinths are popular, but the bulbs break apart and they flower less and less each year. Squill, hyacinth, daffodils and tulips are spring-blooming and need a winter chill in the ground. Planting during October and November are ideal when the soil temperature is cooling down into the 40's.

Some unusual bulbs to try are autumn crocus which bloom in the fall and can be planted in July and August. Other crocus that is fall blooming are not considered as true bulbs, rather they are classified as corms. So they are bulb-like because they lack the outer fleshy scales like true bulbs. Montbretia and gladiolus are in the same class. However, they bloom during the summer and need to be planted in the spring. Once they are finished blooming, montbretia and gladiolus need to be dug up and keep in a cool place that is frost-free over winter. That can be challenging to find that cool place.

For the true bulbs that you decide to purchase, pay attention to the type of soil in your landscape. Tulips, daffodils and hyacinths planted in a light soil or a soil with more sand needs to be planted at a depth of 7 inches. While tulips, hyacinths and daffodils planted in a heavier soil with more clay need to be planted no deeper than 5 inches. Of the three bulbs mentioned, daffodils can be grown successfully in any soil even though a well-drained sandy loam is ideal. With daffodils or narcissus, there are nine different classifications of varieties. Narcissus jonquilla is classified in group number 6 with a description of grasslike foliage, small sweet-scented flowers, single or in clusters.

For fertilizing bulbs, place bone meal in the hole with the bulbs. This will become available as the soil warms and the bulbs begin to grow. It acts as a slow release fertilizer. The middle number on the bone meal should be the highest number. The middle number corresponds to the amount of phosphorus which contributes to good root development, the production of fruits and seeds and helps balance an overabundance of nitrogen in the soil. In eastern Colorado there is about 1% nitrogen in soils and certainly no overabundance. In alkaline soils, phosphorus becomes less available to plants. Phosphorus moves very slowly in the soil, so place the fertilizer close to where the root zone of the bulbs will develop.

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This year Master Gardeners throughout the Golden Plains Area will be taking bulb orders through Flower Power. Bulbs are shipped direct from Holland.

Phillips County Extension Master Gardeners are encouraging people to donate to the Heginbotham Library. The bulbs purchased will be planted at the library. Donate to the Master Gardener Program and help the library. Your donations help the Master Gardeners continue their volunteer work on educational projects and beautifying the community.

There are a host of bulbs offered that will do well here such as daffodils, grape hyacinths, tulips and reblooming irises are available direct from Holland.

Two spectacular additions for your landscape is a daffodil called Avalon which starts out with yellow petals and white corolla and then soften over time to a pale yellow. With the reblooming irises Immortality is a pure white which blooms in spring and reblooms through October.

Bulbs can be used in the landscape to transition between one season into the next. You can use daffodils to take you from early spring through early summer. Daylilies can be used to cover the dead leaves of daffodils for the rest of the summer. Daylilies also offer a wide variety of rebloomers. Stella D' Oro is the most popular and widely used rebloomer. There are a host of others in all colors for early, mid and late season in the garden.

Bulbs can help one to have an everblooming garden. Master Gardeners Annette Shaw, Ardie Besse, Laura Bittner, Dave Hensley, Betsy Marquardt, Lora Bierman, Barb Neugebauer, Jennifer Hayes and Susan Hinck can help select bulbs for your landscape.