Buy Your Spring Bulbs Now

Planting Tips for Lea County

If you want early spring flowering bulbs such as tulips, daffodils, hyacinths and a host of other spring beauties you most purchase these dormant plants now. Growing 2014 spring flowering bulbs is fairly easy in Lea County. The planting tips given below are usually the downfall to most bulb plantings succeeding properly.

**Planting tips for success**

1. **Purchase or select quality bulbs.**

   *Here’s where the first mistake is made most often by gardeners.* Sizes and cost does make a big difference in your outcome when Spring 2014 rolls around and you are ready to see your tulips and daffodils blooming. You must select high-quality bulbs at the garden centers, box stores or even through the mail order catalogs. Look for those bulbs that plump, firm and big. Bulbs that are soft and mushy or have a greenish mold on them will rot in the ground. A rule of thumb, the bigger the bulb or more noses as in daffodils and size will produce larger flowers and more blooms according to the plant variety selected. The smaller the size in tulips, daffodils and hyacinths are usually culls bought up from the wholesale growers and they may bloom a little bloom or not. *You pay for what you get with spring bulbs.*

   ![An assortment of Spring Bulbs...good quality and sizes.](image)

2. **Pick the right planting spot.**

   Even with the healthiest and largest bulbs purchased they will fail if they are planted in the wrong spot or location. Most spring bulbs do best in full sun; that is at least six hours of direct sunlight. They need to be planted in well drained soil. Wet feet produce rotted bulbs and no spring color.

3. **Right Timing is Critical.**

   Spring bulbs, such as tulips, daffodils and hyacinths, crocuses and a many smaller minor bulbs must be planted in late October through mid-November for Lea County gardens. The bulbs mentioned above need to be planted when the soil temperatures are cooled down and freezes are occurring. *Fall plant-ings are a must.*

   Summer bulbs are just that. You buy with the same knowledge being given for the fall bulbs. Dahlias, cannas and gladiolus and other summer bulbs are planted in late spring for summer flowering and after the frost dangers are over for Lea County.
4. Plant the Bulbs at proper depths.

Not sure how to plant your tulips, daffodils, hyacinths and the like? This is common question asked by many gardeners everywhere.

Generally, dig a hole 2 or 3 inches deeper that the bulb is tall.

A 3 inch daffodil bulb would be planted at least 6 to 9 inches deep. There are some exceptions on some varieties of plants, so check the planting guide that comes with the spring bulb orders or packages.

5. What’s up, what’s down?

Another gardener’s question, “How to know what side to plant upwards”? If the bulb has a pointed end, that is usually the side that faces up and is the emerging growing point. Other bulbs, like the ranunculus, looks like a bunch of dried bananas, and the points are down. These are fleshy roots that are dehydrated for the moment. Look for the roots or old growth stems from last year as an indicator too.

6. Spring Bulbs like good soil.

Most plants and especially spring bulbs love and respond in well-drained soil rich in organic matter. So mix compost in your planting holes or dig in compost over the entire bulb bed area if planting in drifts for a mass display. Prepare your bed, this is a critical step for success with spring bulbs. NO caliche, this will wipe your efforts out totally with the spring bulbs I am talking about. They will not tolerate this soil type and die off.

7. Stop Winter Weeds.

Besides being ugly and a pain in the behind to deal with, winter weed and grasses growing in bulb beds steal the nutrients the bulbs need. Weeds and grasses will attract insects and diseases that will affect your spring bulbs in growth and bloom. Use 2 or 3 inches of mulch over the bed area, the bulbs will push up and through this covering. Weed seeds will not.
8. Water well after planting.
Bulbs are dormant plants now. So they need a good drink of water after you plant them. This applied moisture will help break them out of dormancy and begin to send out roots to become established. **DO NOT DROWN**…too much water and mucky wet soil will hasten rotten bulbs. Just keep an even soil moisture, scratch the surface to an inch, if dry apply water. On the other hand do not let the soil dry out completely as this will kill your bulbs as quickly.

9. Plant in groups or natural drifts.
Most spring flowering bulbs plantings look their best when mass planted or in small clustered groups.

A better look is one of irregular shaped groupings in the landscaped areas. The more bulbs planted the bigger the flowering impact… the WOW factor!!! You can toss the bulbs onto the ground and plant where they land, this is called a natural design planting and it is an effectual way to plant spring bulbs. It is okay if some bulbs land close to one another than the planting guide states on distance apart. This approach adds to the natural look.

10. Plant bulbs into containers.
Most spring bulbs do well in containers as they do in the ground. We must adjust our growing technique here to achieve success. Create pots of your favorite colors with tulips, daffodils and hyacinths. Plant the bulbs into the pots they will grow in and sink these pots into the garden soil. Make sure the bulbs are at the proper depths for the pots they are in. As stated earlier these bulbs need the cold and moist soil to begin their growth processes inside the pots. Just remember to water them in and more often in our arid climate. When spring growth is seen in these pots pull them up and nestle them into larger pots or containers for spring show of color. Remember they are above ground and spring winds will dry them out quickly than in the ground conditions. You will water more often. When blooming is over plant the potted soil ball into the garden.