

FLOWERING BULBS

Summer Beauty with Bulbs"

Flowering bulbs were probably the earliest ornamental plant to be grown. More than 3,500 years ago the Minoans on Crete cultivated *Lilium Candidum* (Madonna Lily) as a garden flower. The main focus of bulbs today, are to add color, shape, and fragrance to your flower beds.

There are four types of bulbs. All consist of fleshy tissue where nutrients and moisture are stored. The first type, are corms which are your Freesia and Gladiolus. Both prefer sunny locations. Excellent for fresh arrangements and Freesia will give you an extra citrusy fragrance for you bouquets.

Second, are Rhizomes which are your Cannas - Cannas are very showy four to five inch blossoms standing 24 inches above a coarse textured plant. They prefer full sun; blooming summer to fall. Bearded Iris are included in this category.

This group of *Lilium*'s is the third type called True Bulbs. Lilies can be planted from spring to fall. There are several groups like Asiatic, Oriental and Trumpet style. There is many colors to choose from within each group. *Lilium* will tolerate full sun to part shade, excellent as cut flowers.

The final group includes tubers which includes Begonias and Dahlias. Within each tuber family there are several varieties to choose from. The Tuberous Begonia does however prefer partial shade and moist conditions.

Dahlias flowers range in size from a few inches to dinner plate size. Colors choices are varied and some even are bi-colored and variegated. They also prefer moist, but well-drained fertile soil.

After you have decided on the spot for your bulbs, you will need to prepare the soil. Most bulbs require soil that holds moisture, but not to much. Heavy soil is deadly to bulbs, as they will become rotten. If you have sandy soil, that can be a problem as well, leaving the bulbs to dry out. Loamy soil which, consist of clay, sand, silt, and organic matter is the ideal mixture.

If your soil has too much sand or clay to allow proper drainage, add organic matter to improve the aeration to clay soils, and it will-aid in moisture retention for sandy soils. Organic matter can be well rotted compost, shredded leaves, or ground pine bark. Organic matter adds nutrients and helps maintain a p.h. between 6.0 and 7.0 which is preferred by most bulbs.

When preparing the soil; work the beds thoroughly. At which time you can add a slow release fertilizer or an organic fertilizer like bone meal or dried blood.

When should you start your summer bulbs? The first ones are Caladiums and Tuberous Begonia. They should be started three to four weeks indoors in the spring and should have several inches of growth before they're transplanted outdoors. In our region it's also best to start the Canna and Dahlia's indoors.

The planting depth varies with soil types. In lighter soils you can plant the bulbs an inch or so deeper and in heavy soil plant them shallower. There are some exceptions to the rule like Madonna Lilies and Tuberous Begonia which prefer to be planted closer to the surface.

You can find all of these bulbs mentioned; the material to amend your soil at Albeni Falls Building Supply. Plus plenty of helpful hints and tips to turn your garden into a beautiful bouquet.