

## FORCING OF SPRING FLOWERING BULBS

Forcing is the method by which spring bulbs are brought into flower indoors or in other than naturally occurring conditions. Forcing bulbs takes approximately 16-18 weeks. Planting around October 1 for flowers in late January, planting around mid-October for February flowers and planting around mid-November for March and April flowers.

When planting, fill the pot loosely with enough houseplant potting soil so that the top of the bulb will be even with the top of the pot. Place 6 tulips, 3 hyacinths, 6 daffodils or 15 crocuses in a 6 inch pot. When planting tulips, plant the flat side of the bulb facing the outside of the pot. When the bulb grows, the first large leaf of the plant will face outward and form a nice decorative, symmetrical display of foliage around the pot.

Do not press the bulbs into the soil. The soil beneath the bulbs should be loose so that rooting can take place quickly. Cover the bulbs, but do not fill the entire pot. Fill only to within ¼ inch of the top to facilitate easy watering. Label each pot with the name of the bulb the date of planting and the estimated date you plan to take it out of cold storage.

The cold treatment must last 12-14 weeks to insure good flowering. Water the pots and store them in an area with temperature between 35 and 48 degrees F. this might include the refrigerator, a cold frame, an unheated cellar, the interior wall of an attached garage, a screened porch or other sheltered location.

Keep the soil moist during the entire period of cold storage. This insures a good root system. After a minimum of 12 weeks, bring the bulbs into the house. Longer cold storage will result in taller flowers.

Place the pots in an area at 60 degrees and in direct sunlight. The plants will flower in 3-4 weeks. Fertilizer is not needed since the bulbs contain most of the nutrients they need.

The **Master Gardener Hotline** is open from April to October, Monday through Friday. Lines are available 9:00 am to noon and 1:00 pm to 4:00 pm at 888-678-3464

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