



## Flower Bulbs in Pollinator Gardens

by Kent County Master Gardener Cheryl Fisher

Fall is the perfect time to plan for and plant your spring flower garden. If you start now, you can design your own flower garden by planting bulbs using a variety of flowers and arrangements. So, plan now for those lovely tulips, crocuses and daffodils to announce the arrival of spring. There are several simple reasons to plant flower bulbs:

- 1) bulbs are easy – they are packaged for easy planting & low maintenance;
- 2) bulbs are bountiful - brightly colored flowers come in all varieties;
- 3) bulbs are dependable – they bloom consistently on time, year after year; and
- 4) bulbs like bees -- and bees like bulbs.



Master gardener photo

**Daffodil** a fall or hardy bulb.

Popular Bee Friendly Bulbs For The Pollinator Garden,” in recent years, pollinator gardens have become quite popular among hobby gardeners and seasoned growers, alike. Flowering plants within the garden offer beautiful floral displays in the landscape, as well as serve as essential sources of pollen and nectar needed by insects.

According to “Gardening Know How: Planting Bulbs For Bees –

### How To Plant

Plant bulbs according to their instructions.

- Choose where to plant, full sun/partial shade.
- Prepare planting bed, add compost.
- Plant 2-3 inches apart, with point up, usually 2-4 inches deep or according to their instructions.

### Common Problems

Some common problems bulb growers encounter are:

- Inadequate nutrients, cutting off foliage before it has died back; you should leave it.
- Inadequate sunlight, planted in shade; move to sun.
- Overcrowding large clumps of flowers; time to separate bulbs.

### After Blooming Care

After blooming, cut only the flower stem back. Leave foliage intact until it turns yellow and wilts to the ground.

Spring bulbs:

- In warmer climates bulbs that

## What are bulbs?

Any plant that stores its complete life cycle in an underground storage structure - to store nutrient reserves to ensure the plant's survival. There are five types of storage: true bulbs, corms, tubers and tuberous roots, rhizomes, and fleshy roots.

## So, when's the best time to plant?

**Fall-planting bulbs** - as soon as the ground is cool, evening temps 40° - 50° F., for spring bloom. Also called hardy bulbs, these are planted in fall, spend winter in the ground, and flower in spring. Some of the more common spring bulbs are: tulips, irises, daffodils, hyacinths, alliums, and crocuses. They need several weeks of cold temperatures to break their dormancy and flower to full potential.

**Summer-planting bulbs** - planted in late spring after last frost, typically May 31, for summer to early fall blooms. Also called tender bulbs, these are planted in spring and flower or leaf out in late summer. Some more common summer bulbs



Master gardener photo

**Gladiolus** a summer bulbs.

include: gladiolus, lilies, caladiums, elephant ears. Some bulbs will bloom later in summer or for a longer time, like dahlias that bloom into fall. Summer bulbs are not tolerant of cold temperatures and should only be planted after the ground warms up and there's no longer a threat of frost.

## Where to plant?

You can plant your bulbs in pots or in the ground. Here are some helpful tips:

require chilling can be dug up and stored until pre-chilling time the following fall.

- For colder climates, they can stay in the ground. Many will multiply and return year after year.

Summer bulbs:

- In warmer climates, bulbs can be left in the ground with a layer of mulch in winter to protect and insulate them.
- In colder climates, they'll need to be dug up and stored until the following spring.

## Author



Master Gardener  
Cheryl Fisher

Tag-team with annuals, interplant with other perennials, ring the tree in the yard with spring flowers, plant flower bulbs in clusters, stagger blooming times, try a double-decker effect.



Master gardener photo

**Tulip bulbs** arranged in pots.

You can scale your garden to fit your needs and capabilities.

Not only good for Sunday dinner, lasagna (planting) is great for bulbs in pots. Plant bulbs with different sizes and staggered bloom times in layers for a continual bloom. This works great in large containers that are deep and wide enough.

### Review a Workshop

You can review a pre-recorded workshop on “The Joy of Flower Bulbs.”

Source: Read more at Gardening Know How: Planting Bulbs For Bees – Popular Bee Friendly Bulbs For The Pollinator Garden <https://www.gardeningknowhow.com/garden-how-to/beneficial/planting-bulbs-for-bees.htm>

For questions on this subject or any gardening topic call the Master Gardener Helpline: In New Castle County, (302) 831-8862; in Kent County, (302) 730-4000; and in Sussex County, (302) 856-2585 x 535. The Master Gardeners monitor the Helpline in the winter but it may take a few days to get back to you.

## Delaware Cooperative Extension



Cooperative Extension Education in Agriculture, 4-H and Home Economics, Delaware State University, University of Delaware and United States Department of Agriculture cooperating, Dr. Cherese Winstead, Dean and Administrator. It is the policy of Delaware Cooperative Extension that no person shall be subjected to discrimination on the grounds of race, color, sex, disability, age, or national origin.



## Questions

For more information about Master Gardener workshops, garden helplines, presentations, becoming a Master Gardener Volunteer, or other activities, please visit these websites.

UD Website - <https://www.udel.edu/academics/colleges/canr/cooperative-extension/environmental-stewardship/master-gardeners/>

DSU Website- <https://cast.desu.edu/cooperative-extension/agriculture-natural-resources/delaware-master-gardeners>