



Success With Tulips

At a time when most things in the garden are still asleep, bulbs will signal the return of spring. And of all the spring bulbs, there is nothing that rivals the tulip. They're easy and offer such a wide variety of colors, shapes and blooming times that you'll want to put in some of each.



Tulips come in several types, each with its own characteristics and uses. Most importantly, consider where you are going to use the bulbs and select varieties that will fit the setting. Small, intimate areas or rock gardens work best with species type tulips. Large groupings viewed from a distance need bolder colors and larger blooms. Next, choose the varieties that look good to you. Color and bloom shape usually help you determine which tulips you want, but don't forget to check the height of the plant and the blooming date.

Why don't my tulips come back? Sometimes this is just a matter of the care you give the tulips, but often it is the type of tulip you have planted. Certain types of tulips, such as species, Kaufmanniana, Viridiflora and Fosteriana are longer lived than others. Darwin Hybrids combine the best of both groups. The Darwin hybrids which we offer are good tulip varieties for perennialization. Some gardeners claim that planting tulips deeper will enhance hardiness.

Where will tulips grow? Tulips grow in any well-drained soil. They prefer full sun to do their best, but you can often be successful in partial shade if you choose early bulbs. The amount of spring sun is the most important.

When and How to plant

To provide adequate time for rooting, it is best to plant tulips in late September to mid-October. If you need to plant them a little later, plant them an inch or two deeper and mulch heavily.



The rule is to plant tulips pointed end up and 6 inches deep, meaning 4 inches of soil above the top of the bulb. Plant a little deeper, to 8 inches, if soil is light or sandy, or if pests such as voles are a problem. Those 2 extra inches put them just out of reach of voles. Deep planting also keeps the bulbs cooler, an advantage in mild-winter areas.

For an attractive flower display, plant five tulips per square foot, or 250 bulbs per 50 square feet. Space individual bulbs about 5 inches apart. Use a low-nitrogen granular fertilizer specially formulated for bulbs, and follow label directions about the amount to apply. When planting a grouping, take the extra care to plant at exactly the same depth; this ensures that they all will bloom at the same time. With a shovel, excavate soil to create a level planting base. Set bulbs into the bed, fertilize, and then cover with excavated soil.

Firm soil and water thoroughly. Don't water again until leaves appear. In cold-winter areas (zones 3 through 6), apply straw mulch about a month after planting. This gives the bulbs time to begin growth before the soil freezes solidly. The mulch also protects the bulbs if snow cover is light or nonexistent. In mild-winter areas mulch after planting to help keep soil as cool as possible for as long as possible.

Should I fertilize bulbs? Even though a true bulb has everything it needs to bloom, tulips will profit from being fertilized when they are planted. Bulb food, an improvement on bone meal, works best when scratched into the surface of the soil after planting. Spring fertilization with high nitrogen products is not recommended since this will encourage certain diseases

How can I protect my tulips from rodents? Squirrels may be a problem, since they love tulip bulbs and love to dig where you have just planted. Most gardeners have luck covering the area where tulips are planted until the ground freezes. Once tulips have made it through the few weeks when they smell like a fresh, tasty treat, squirrels leave them alone. Large areas can be covered with chicken wire. Spreading blood meal or moth balls on the surface of the ground where you have planted tulips may confuse the squirrel's sense of smell and keep them from knowing where to dig..

How should I care for my tulips after they bloom? Flower stems should be removed when the bloom has faded to encourage bulb development instead of seed development. Be sure to allow the leaves to grow until they naturally wither in June before you remove the foliage.

What could cause my tulips not to bloom? There are several factors involved in tulips failing to bloom, and often it is caused by more than one thing at a time. If it is the first season and the bulb fails to bloom, the most common reasons are squirrels eating the bulbs, soggy soil rotting the bulbs, too shallow planting, or planting too early in the fall. When planted too early, the flower stalk will start to emerge in late fall. The winter will then destroy the flower but won't kill the bulb, resulting in leaves and no blooms. If this isn't the first season and the tulips fail to bloom, the most common reasons are too little sun, removing last season's foliage before it is naturally ripened or the tulip has reached the end of its productive lifespan.

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TULIP Facts	
COLORS	Countless colors in solids and bicolors
LIGHT	Full sun to partial shade
SOIL	Well drained
WATER	During dry periods only. Over watering may cause rotting.
pH	Slightly acid to neutral
HARDINESS	Normally Will not dependably bloom after 2-3 years. Darwin hybrids and species tulips are best for perennialization
USES	Beds, borders, rock gardens, containers, and as cut flowers
TIP	Do not remove leaves following flowering. Allow to die down naturally. Mix some organic matter (such as peat moss) into the