



<https://ngb.org/year-of-the-hyacinth/>

## Hyacinth bulbs need to go in the ground soon

For more than 400 years, flower lovers have been cultivating hyacinths. Giving the tulip a run for its money in popularity, hyacinths were the most popular bulb in the world during the 18<sup>th</sup> century. During that time, Dutch growers offered more than 2,000 named cultivars. Today, there are fewer than 50 cultivars in commercial production, but they're just as beautiful as ever.

Most commonly known as Dutch hyacinths or garden hyacinths, they're hybrids of the single species *Hyacinthus orientalis* that grows wild in Turkey, Syria and other areas of the eastern Mediterranean.

Today's hyacinths look very different than their wild counterparts. Following centuries of breeding, they feature taller flower spikes and much larger, mostly double florets that are compact on the stem. The most popular cultivars are various shades of purple and blue.

Hyacinth bulbs should be planted now through late fall, which coincides with the planting of tulips and daffodils. Choose a spot with well-drained soil that doesn't get soggy. While full sun is best, hyacinths will grow in light shade. Ideally, bulbs should be planted in groups of five or more, spaced about 5 inches apart and at a depth of about 4 to 5 inches.

Like tulips, hyacinths look their best the first spring after planting. Although the bulbs will bloom for several years, they gradually revert to the original species with single florets that are widely spaced along the stem. For this reason, many gardeners choose to plant new bulbs every couple of years.

Here are a few quick garden tips for hyacinths:

- Plant the bulbs where it's easy to enjoy their fragrance, such as near a doorway, along a garden path or at the front edge of a flower border.
- Wear gloves when planting or wash hands after handling them because hyacinth bulbs can cause mild skin irritation.
- For those who live in areas populated with deer, chipmunks and voles, these bulbs contain oxalic acid, which makes them unappealing to these creatures.

- Hyacinths are long-lasting cut flowers that will disperse fragrance in an entire room.
- The bulbs flower in early to mid-spring.
- Gardeners can encourage hyacinths to bloom for more than a year by cutting off the flower spikes as soon as the flowers fade.

If you're wanting to get a jump on spring, grow hyacinth bulbs indoors. Go ahead and plant in the fall, but be sure to use pots with drainage holes in the bottom. Fill with moist growing mix and plant the bulbs about 2 inches apart with the top of the bulb about an inch below the soil surface.

To bloom properly, potted hyacinth must be exposed to consistently cold temperatures of 40 to 45 degrees Fahrenheit for at least 10 weeks. An unheated garage is a great place to place the pots as long as the bulbs don't freeze. Following the chilling period, move the pots to a sunny window and enjoy watching them come into flower.

###