



## Spring-flowering bulbs should be planted soon

Many people may be thinking about carving pumpkins and what kind of Halloween candy to buy during this time of the year, but gardening enthusiasts know it's time to get spring-flowering bulbs in the ground before freezing temperatures arrive.

Gardeners are likely receiving catalogs full of colorful photos of various bulbs available for planting, and the shelves at the local garden store are beginning to fill up with a variety of selections. Ordering from a catalog will give gardeners a larger selection, but purchasing from a nearby garden store allows customers to inspect the bulbs in person. Aside from tulips, some common spring-flowering bulbs include daffodils, crocuses, hyacinths and snowdrops.

If gardeners want a longer display of blooms, mix different species of blooming bulbs. Some species, like tulips, have early, mid- and late-season blooming varieties. Planting several varieties together will enable gardeners to extend the blooming time over several weeks.

One thing to keep in mind when planting bulbs is to plant generously, but not necessarily in a group. Plant at least 20 bulbs about a foot apart for the best visual interest in the landscape. Avoid planting in a straight row.

As with any gardening, site selection is vital for success. Choose an area that is well-drained and amend the soil with organic matter to improve soil quality. Another option is to plant in raised beds. Most spring-flowering bulbs prefer full sun to partial shade. Make sure to read the planting instructions on the package label as well as application rate recommendations for applying fertilizer.

Generally, bulbs are planted at two to three times the diameter of the bulb. Using a trowel or bulb planter, dig a hole for each bulb and place it root-side down. Gently backfill the holes with the removed soil, pressing it down to eliminate air pockets. Next, generously water the area to help settle the soil.

Gardeners may opt to apply a layer of mulch, including straw, bark or shredded leaves, to help regulate soil temperature and conserve moisture. Doing so can also help deter weed growth.

Keep the area well-maintained by watering as needed and protecting the bulbs from pests.

Planting spring-flowering bulbs in the fall will reward homeowners and gardening enthusiasts with a burst of color and fragrance in the garden when spring arrives.