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YOU CAN NEVER HAVE TOO MANY SPRING BULBS

Each spring, do you look with envy at the glorious bulb displays of your friends and neighbors, wishing that you had planted flower bulbs the previous fall? Now is your chance to plant a spring garden for the next year. Bulbs are one of the easiest and least expensive ways to achieve color in the garden or landscape. In my many years of helping people with their gardens, I have learned a few basic design fundamentals that I will pass on to you so that your investment in flower bulbs will pay off for you in a breathtakingly beautiful garden next spring . . .

- * Always plant bulbs in masses or groupings, never singly. I usually use odd numbered groupings of 3 to 11 or more bulbs in a cluster. This is to achieve a dramatic effect. If you are only planting a few bulbs, keep them close together or you will dilute their effect.
- * The farther away you will be viewing a bulb display, the larger the groupings should be. If your garden is across a large back yard, plant daffodils in drifts of 9-11 bulbs per cluster and scatter these large groupings throughout the garden. If your garden is by the front door where you will be viewing it up close, the groupings can be smaller.
- * The smaller the bulb, the larger the grouping. I think nothing of planting 100 crocus or scilla in an area where I would put 25 tulips or daffodils.
- * The longer I design with bulbs, the closer together I plant them! Often, suggested spacings on the care tag can be ignored and bulbs can be placed much closer together. I find this helps to heighten their effectiveness.
- * Consider underplanting larger bulbs with minor bulbs to create interesting combinations. Classic pairings include red tulips with blue grape hyacinths, yellow daffodils with blue scilla, etc.
- * Always pay attention to the bloom period of the bulbs. There are different bulbs that will bloom from March until June and beyond. Match early April tulips with other bulbs that bloom in the same time period. It's all too easy to look at the pretty pictures and create combinations in your mind that won't work in reality because the actual bloom periods don't coincide. Let the Natureworks staff help you understand when our bulbs bloom here in Connecticut.
- * Plant the bulbs in clusters **BETWEEN** the perennials in the garden. Because bulb foliage disappears by early summer, if you allow them their own large space, you will have unsightly gaps in the perennial garden. Instead, by planting them between the perennials, the bulbs will provide early dramatic color when the perennials are just emerging and the perennials will help to hide the ripening bulb foliage later.
- * Try to match spring bulbs with early spring blooming perennials. This doubles the bulbs' effectiveness. Think white candytuft with pink daffodils; pink azaleas with purple May blooming tulips, red peonies with purple Alliums. You get the idea!
- * Plant early bulbs between perennials and shrubs that sprout later in the spring and leave large gaps in April. Examples include butterfly weed (*Asclepias*), butterfly bushes (*Buddleia*), beautyberry (*Callicarpa*), and perennial Hibiscus.
- * Avoid, if you can, rigid straight lines when you plant. Unless you are creating formal gardens, bulb plantings look more natural if they are done in sweeping curves or graceful drifts.

* Tulips last for a few years and then they should be replaced. Luckily, tulips are quite inexpensive and the blast of color that they contribute to the garden is really worth it. Think about how long it has been since your tulip displays were replenished. There are tulips that bloom in April and May and the flowering season can be coordinated to provide two months of blooms. Feeding your tulips when they emerge and after flowering prolongs their life span. Always remove spent blossoms and never let seed pods form.

Species tulips are true perennials. Many of them have small, star-like flowers that should be planted in large clusters or drifts. We have many species tulips that come up in our gardens year after year.

* Daffodils are true perennials and increase over the years. They are also deer resistant! Daffodils bloom in April thru mid-May and come in many sizes and colors. We carry many late blooming daffodils and lots of very sweet miniatures for rock gardens and entry way gardens.

* Alliums are extremely popular. They are also deer resistant and provide dramatic color LATE in the spring, in late May, June and even July. They are a very welcome addition in combination with the late spring and early summer blooming perennials.

* There are many delightful minor bulbs that give you color in February, March, April, and beyond. Minor bulbs simply mean the bulbs are small and diminutive - it certainly doesn't refer to their importance!! Early spring color is a balm for the winter weary soul. I know it's hard to imagine that feeling now, but believe me, these little gems are so welcome after the cold and gray winter months.

Chionodoxa (Glory of the Snow) can be planted in masses directly into the lawn for a blue carpet. This is an amazing sight. They self-sow and spread quickly over the years.

Snow Crocus, also called "species crocus", bloom in early March, a few weeks before the giant crocus. They often bloom right through late snow storms!

Scilla siberica (Siberian squill) is one of the truest blue spring bulbs. They combine beautifully with April tulips and spread quickly over the years. Pushknia is also a diminutive, early, true blue flowering bulb that naturalizes easily.

Iris reticulata is a charming miniature iris that blooms in March with soft blue or purple flowers.

Winter Aconite is a lovely yellow spreader that is one of the first minor bulbs to bloom, often in February.

Snowdrops are February and March bloomers. They tell us "Spring is around the corner!" They are vole and deer proof, naturalize easily, and are excellent perennials. They will bloom in sun or shade. Always plant some near your door so you can enjoy them up close.

Hyacinthoides hispanica and Hyacinthoides non-scripta are called "Wood Hyacinth" because they bloom and spread so well in shady, woodland situations. They make great cut flowers and flower in May.

* Did you know that there are FALL blooming bulbs? We carry Colchicums - a giant form of pink crocus that blooms in early September, and we also carry SAFFRON CROCUS, lavender crocus flowers that bloom in late October. Saffron is harvested from the stigma of the flowers. It's so much fun to grow these as they surprise everyone by their late blooming season and by the fact that you can pick saffron from the flower!

Deer proof bulbs include:

Daffodils, Alliums, Fritillaria, Snowdrops, Leucojum (summer snowflake) and Colchicum.

The best protection for all other bulbs is to add Repellex Systemic to each planting hole and again in early spring as deer-susceptible bulbs emerge. To protect against deer browsing, spread Deer Scram and spray the buds with Deer Stopper every three weeks. You can join our email Deer Blast to get a reminder.

We will be glad to help you plan your spring bulb garden. Please do not hesitate to ask for assistance from our trained staff. We want your spring garden next year to be all you have dreamed it could be!

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