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Home Grounds, Gardens, Home Pests

Purchase and Plant Spring Flowering Bulbs Now

To have a beautiful array of flowering bulbs this spring, the time to purchase and plant bulbs is now.

Before purchasing your bulbs you first need to decide which ones are best for your landscape. Think about the colors and heights of the bulbs before purchasing. For this area of Alabama the most common bulbs available include tulips, hyacinths and daffodils, but other specialty bulbs that do well in this area that you may consider include allium, crocus, galanthus, fritillaria and scillas.



Allium

Crocus

Galanthus

Fritillaria

Scillas

Purchase bulbs from reputable sources and check them for health before purchasing. Check for firmness of the bulbs, do not purchase molded or crushed bulbs and buy early to get the best selections and healthiest bulbs available. Another consideration should be the size of the bulbs. The size is directly related to the size and number of flowers. Generally, the bigger the bulb the bigger the flower. Small nicks and loose skin don't affect development of the bulb. In fact, loose skin aids in inspecting for diseases, and encourages rooting. If necessary to store the bulbs before time of planting, keep the bulbs cool and store between 50-65 F.

The optimal planting time for most areas in Alabama is late October to late December. Bulbs perform best with a soil pH between 6-7. When preparing to plant, remember several things: Good drainage is essential for spring flowering bulbs. If your soil is mostly clay, mix in an organic material such as peat

moss, compost or aged bark. Don't mix more than 50 percent organic material with the soil. If your soil is mostly sand, add an organic material to increase water- and nutrient-holding capacity.

Plant small-sized bulbs (one inch in height) 4 or 5 inches deep and a little deeper in sandy soils and space small bulbs an inch to 2 inches apart. For large bulbs (2 or more inches in height) plant them 6 to 8 inches deep and space larger bulbs 3 to 6 inches apart. Cover the bed with 2 to 3 inches of mulch. If the fall season is dry, make sure to water the area appropriately.

To fertilize your bulbs it is best to take a soil sample to know for sure the pH of the soil and also what nutrients are lacking. However, bulbs can be grown successfully for a season or two by using a slow-release complete fertilizer. Incorporated the fertilizer into the soil at planting at a rate of one tablespoon per square foot.

SOURCE: Dr. Dave Williams, Auburn University Professor of Horticulture, Kerry Smith, Alabama Cooperative Extension System.