

Planting Bulbs for Spring

In this activity you will learn the right way to handle and how to plant bulbs.

What do we need to start?

- Daffodil (Tete-a-tete type) and Hyacinth bulbs
- Some pots about 14cm diameter in size
- Labels and pencil
- Bulb fibre or potting compost and sharp sand or soil
- Plunge-bed or waterproof box for planted pots
- Work area and newspaper to prevent mess

(Take Care! Hyacinth bulbs can irritate the skin. Handle bulbs with care. Always wash your hands after handling soil and plant material)

Spring bulbs are easy to grow and, providing a few simple rules are followed, hardly anything can go wrong. When choosing daffodil bulbs for potting, get a variety which has a short, strong, stem that can support the flower-head/s and will not grow too tall and become floppy. Hyacinth bulbs do not vary greatly in size and the large flowers generally need support. Some hyacinth varieties and the smaller bulbs tend to support themselves better.



Instructions:

1. Bulbs like damp, free draining soil. Bulb fibre, potting compost or garden soil can be used as well as a mixture of sharp sand and compost in equal quantities. Fill the pot with compost or the sand mixture so that the pointed ends of the bulbs just show above the top of the pot. Finish filling around the bulbs with the compost/soil. A 14cm pot will generally hold 3 Hyacinth bulbs or between 5 and 10 small (Tete-a-tete type) daffodil bulbs.
2. Label each pot indicating the bulb variety and date planted. Then give them a good watering and allow the pots to drain before you store them for the winter.
3. Pot-planted bulbs can be a disappointment when they are not stored correctly. A warm, dark cupboard is not a good place for bulb storage as they tend to dry out with the leaves and stems becoming long, yellow and floppy. The best results are obtained by placing the pots in a cool, well ventilated, dark area or to use a 'plunge-bed'. A plunge-bed allows bulbs to grow naturally and their flowering can be controlled.
4. To construct a plunge-bed, dig a pit in a well-drained piece of ground that will not flood - near a tree or hedge will be fine. A wooden frame, big enough to hold the pots, placed on top of the ground, will do equally as well. Place the pots in the plunge-bed or frame and cover them with soil, compost or sand to a depth of about 5cm. They can now be forgotten until the spring. A strong cardboard box stored in a dry, cold garage or shed will do equally as well. Cover the pots in the same way as above and don't let them dry out. The bulbs will slowly grow during the winter months and in February, when green shoots are showing, they should be removed from the plunge-bed/store and given plenty of light. A combination of temperature and light will determine when the bulbs flower. High temperatures and low light levels will produce poor floppy plants. The best results are achieved from natural growth in a cool, well-lit area. A steady increase in temperature and good light will advance the flowering date and produce strong plants.

