



## It's Bulb Planting Time!

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Finally fall has officially arrived. Sunnier weather with less rain is on the horizon giving us a great opportunity to start cleaning up the gardens and pursue other autumnal activities like apple picking, going to fall festivals, and purchasing spring flowering bulbs. There are so many species and cultivars to choose from that often narrowing down your selections is the hardest part.

Tulips are a favorite of many with their huge assortment of colors, flower shapes and bloom times. One can fill little nooks and crannies with petite species tulips to enjoy up close or create an eye-popping bed with swaths of brightly colored Darwin hybrids. Use tulips to line the front walkway or add early color to the perennial gardens. There's a tulip for just about every site as long as it is mostly sunny and well-drained. Deer do enjoy tulips as much as we do so this might not be the best bulb choice if these creatures visit regularly. While the smaller species tulips often do return year after year, our climate is not that conducive to the larger cultivars reliably returning so often they are treated like annuals and new bulbs are planted each fall. This just gives you the chance to change up your color schemes and try new varieties.



Tulips – Photo by dmp2023

Sunny daffodils are not bothered by deer and are renowned for their ability to naturalize in most locations. This means that the bulbs will multiply and that little group of 3 bulbs you planted may increase into a sizable clump in a few years. Like tulips, there are quite a number of daffodils to choose from. Dainty early 'Tete a Tete' sends out blossoms that brave the snow. The curious blossoms of 'Hoop Petticoat' have been grown for centuries. Typically, they are a bright yellow but now white cultivars can be had. Most of us are familiar with the classic deep gold trumpets of 'King Alfred' but do check out the many other cultivars and species available and give some a try.

Fragrant hyacinths burst forth each spring with large fragrant bloom in a carnival of color. Pinks, purples and blues are most common but check out shades of yellow, coral, apricot and rose. Like daffodils, deer and other foragers will leave your hyacinths alone. These hardy bulbs are very long lived in the garden. I have some white ones that were planted more than a dozen years ago yet reappear reliably each spring. Some cultivars will very slowly multiply forming small, well-behaved clumps. The flowers dwindle in number per stalk, but their heady fragrance remains.

There are a number of smaller or minor bulbs that can add a lively touch to your spring landscape. The early blooming ones are especially welcome after a long, cold winter. They are usually pretty reasonably priced so indulge and purchase them by the dozen. Many naturalize rewarding you with years of blossoms.

Favorites include crocuses, scilla, chionodoxa, netted iris, winter aconites, grape hyacinths, snowdrops and puschkinia. Snowdrops bloom the earliest sometimes appearing in late January if we have a particularly mild winter. Species crocus and scilla come next with netted irises and winter aconites following shortly. Bulbs planted in more sheltered, sunny locations will bloom earlier than those in harsher, more exposed conditions.

Whatever species of spring flowering bulb you decide to plant, select firm, large bulbs from your local garden center. There are several online suppliers in Connecticut including Van Engelsen Inc ([www.vanengelen.com](http://www.vanengelen.com)) and John Scheepers Inc ([www.johnscheepers.com](http://www.johnscheepers.com)) and White Flower Farm ([www.whiteflowerfarm](http://www.whiteflowerfarm)). Plant them as early in the fall as you can to give them a long period to establish roots before the ground freezes. Typically, bulbs are planted at a depth of three times their diameter. So a one-inch crocus bulb would be planted 3 inches deep.

Bring some spring color to your gardens by planting some spring flowering bulbs now. For questions about selecting or planting spring flowering bulbs or if you have any other gardening questions, contact the UConn Home & Garden Education at (877) 486-6271 or [www.homegarden.cahnr.uconn.edu](http://www.homegarden.cahnr.uconn.edu) or your local Cooperative Extension Center.