



Johnson's Garden Talk

Lawn and garden information for the friends and customers of Johnson's Garden Centers

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Decisions, Decisions ...

Courtney Cloyd, Johnson's East Store

It's the time of year to plant spring-flowering bulbs, and whether you feel like a kid in a candy store or you find picking through the grand selection of bulbs to be a daunting task, choosing your bulbs wisely is the key to getting the results you want.

For someone who has never planted bulbs before, it's important to pay attention to the package. This will give you valuable information about what time of season the flowers will bloom, how much sun they will need, and whether they will perennialize well.

Stage Your Blooming Times

Because each bulb has a "personality" of its own, getting a variety of different kinds will give you the most out of the blooming season. To ensure the longest-lasting show of colors in your garden, choose a mixture of early bloomers such as fragrant Hyacinth or Crocus, mid-season blooming Tulips and Daffodils and later blooming Allium or Dutch Iris.

Tulips alone can provide a good variety of blooming times. The Early Single, Early Double and Kaufmannia will bloom late March into April. The Darwin and Triumph hybrids will provide color through April and the Greigii, Parrot, Double and Single Late varieties will bloom late April into May.

Bulbs For Perennializing

While shopping for bulbs you should also keep in mind which bulbs will most likely perennialize, or come back year after year. Of course this mostly depends on how you take care of the bulbs. Planting them in good soil with the appropriate light will help, as well as keeping the foliage intact after the blooms are gone so that the plants can store food for the cold season.

In general, the more basic varieties of Tulips are more likely to return than their more flashy and extravagant counterparts. Daffodil and crocus are also known to be repeat visitors.

Forcing Dutch Bulbs

Impatient gardeners who wish to grow their blooming buddies indoors can use a process known as bulb forcing, where the gardener creates a false winter season for the bulbs. Paperwhite Narcissus and Amaryllis are ideal for forcing because neither needs to be chilled before growing. Hyacinths are also popular for forcing because of their large, colorful blooms and pleasing fragrance.

Certain varieties of Tulips, Crocus, Muscari and Galanthus are good for forcing, too. But again, read the packages and do your homework so you'll know what kind of care to give each bulb.

The most important factor in choosing spring bulbs ... pick what you like! Whether it's a modest bunch of eight or a vast ocean of hundreds, your garden should reflect your own style. ■