



## The Art of Gentle Persuasion

### Forcing Bulbs for Indoor Blooms

Of all the flower bulbs, Paperwhite Narcissus and Amaryllis are the easiest to bring into flower indoors, because neither of these bulbs needs to be chilled before growing.

But if you wish to enjoy indoors the many colors and shapes found in the spring garden, you'll want to try hyacinths, tulips, daffodils, crocus, iris reticulata and muscari. Coaxing these spring-flowering bulbs to bloom indoors in the winter is commonly referred to as "Indoor Forcing," but a better term would be "gentle persuasion." By the deceptive use of light and temperature, you can cause the bulb to believe that in a period of 12-15 weeks it has experienced a total "winter through spring" span of 5 months. For best results, choose bulbs that are marked "good for forcing."

#### STEP 1. CONTAINERS

Flower bulbs that you wish to bloom inside the home can be planted in earthenware, plastic, glass pots, or anything that reflects your decorating tastes. What is important is that they are at least 4" deep and that they have a drainage hole.

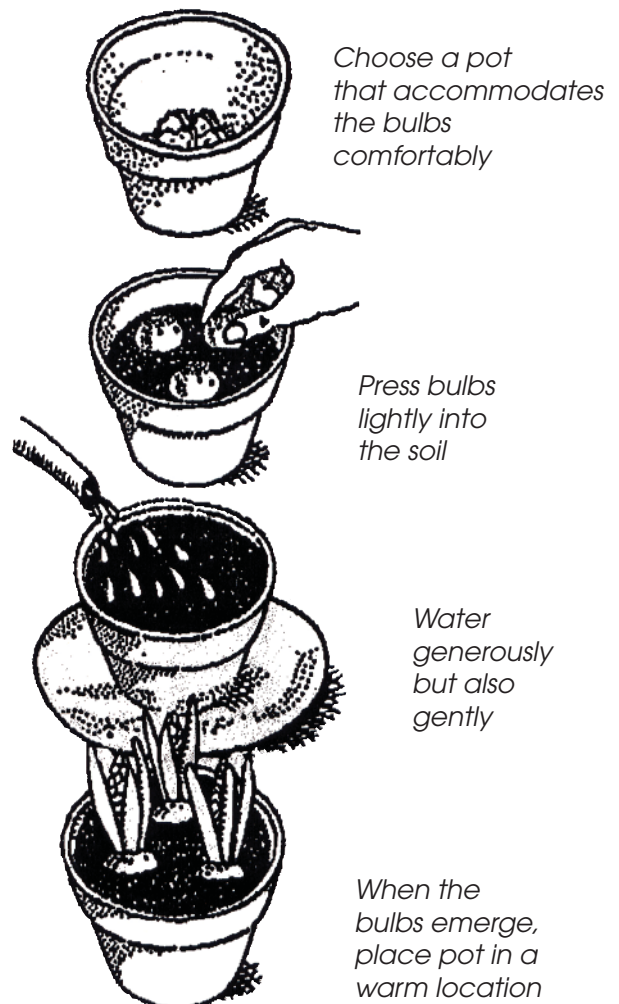
Clay pots should be soaked in water 24 hours prior to use.

#### STEP 2. THE SOIL

Place some pot shards or small rocks on the bottom of your pot to provide better drainage. Partially fill the pot with potting mix (never garden soil) and press down slightly. We recommend ferti•lome Ultimate Potting Mix.

#### STEP 3. THE BULBS

Press the bulbs lightly into the potting mix. The bulbs may be allowed to almost touch one another. When planting tulips, place the flat side towards the edge of the pot so the large first leaf will grow outward over the edge of the pot.



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Always use an uneven number of bulbs in a bowl or container, since this creates a prettier effect. For a showy display, use flower bulbs of a single kind and a single color in one pot.

Be generous with the number of bulbs in each pot—you want it to look full, without crowding the flowers. Plant the bulbs deep enough so that only their tips are above the soil. (Of course, if you were planting these bulbs outside in the garden, you would plant them much deeper and farther apart. The surface of the potting mix should be about one inch below the rim of the pot. Water gently but thoroughly after planting. After the pot has drained, put it in a loosely sealed plastic bag.

## STEP 4. COLD STORAGE ROOTING

Bulbs must experience a period of cool to cold (but not freezing) temperatures to encourage root growth. There are several ways to provide this. One is to bury them in a hole in the garden or in a cold frame and cover them with 12-18 inches of mulch. Or you could place them in a cold cellar where the temperature remains between 32-45°. Lacking these two options, you can keep them in the refrigerator (not the freezer).

The chart below shows you how long the flower bulbs need to be kept cold and when you can expect them to bloom. Planting time lasts from early September until early December. The earlier you plant the bulbs, the earlier they will bloom. If you do not provide the bulbs with a sufficiently long cooling period, the flowers will have short stems. A cold period that is too long produces plants that are too tall.

## STEP 5. FLOWERING

After the cold treatment, it's time to bring the pot into the house for forcing. Keep the pot cool for the first few days; after that, normal room temperature is acceptable. Give the bulbs as much light as possible and give the pot a quarter turn each day so growth doesn't become one-sided. Pay attention to watering. The soil must not dry out nor should it become soggy. It will take another 2-4 weeks for the flowers to appear.

	<u>PLANTING DATE</u>	<u>COLD STORAGE</u>	<u>EARLIEST FLOWERING DATE</u>
HYACINTHS	Sept 15 to Dec 15	10-13 weeks	Dec 15 to Jan 15
TULIPS	Oct 1 to Dec 1	13-17 weeks	Dec 25 to Feb 15
NARCISSUS	Oct 1 to Dec 1	12-16 weeks	Jan 15 to Feb 15
CROCUS	Oct 1 to Nov 1	14-15 weeks	February 1
IRIS RETICULATA	Oct 1 to Nov 1	12-13 weeks	January 5
MUSCARI	Oct 1 to Nov 1	14-15 weeks	February 1

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