

BULBS

Fall bulbs should be planted as soon as the ground is cool, when evening temperatures are consistently between 40° - 50°F. In fall, ground temperatures typically reach 40° - 50°F about 6-8 weeks before the ground freezes. That is the ideal planting window.

A general rule for the planting depth is to plant the bulbs at a depth at least twice the height of the bulb (a minimum of 5 cm / 2 inches). Not planting bulbs deep enough results in poor rooting that leads, in turn, to an uneven emergence of short spindly plants. Well-drained soil is crucial to prevent bulb rot, especially if you are leaving them in the ground for multiple years. Consider fertilizing in the fall and spring to provide additional nutrients for bulb development. To encourage healthy growth and future blooms, provide them with proper care, including watering, fertilizing, and allowing the foliage to die back naturally.

TULIPS

Species tulips are perennial in zones 4 to 7, and will come back year after year in the right growing conditions. These are shorter than hybrid tulips, with smaller flowers and pointier petals. Individual tulips (especially the hybrids) do not flower for very long.

You can leave tulip bulbs in the ground all year, especially in regions with cold winters and well-drained soil. However, they may not flower as vibrantly or as large as they did in the first year.

Perennial Tulips: Some tulip varieties are truly perennial, meaning they can flower for several years in a row when left in the ground.

IRIS

Irises come in three forms, rhizome, bulb or root.

The rhizome type iris produce larger flowers and include bearded and beardless type flowers, while the bulb type iris produce smaller flowers are often used in rock gardens or in front row of borders to provide early color in the year.

The key difference between an iris and a bearded iris lies in the presence or absence of a "beard" on the lower petals, called the "falls". Bearded irises have a distinctive fuzzy, caterpillar-like structure on the falls, while beardless irises lack this feature. For Zone 7, both Siberian irises and bearded irises are excellent

choices. Siberian irises are known for their easy care and adaptability, while bearded irises offer a wider range of colors and reblooming varieties. Other options include Louisiana irises, Dwarf Crested irises, and Japanese irises, each with unique characteristics and care requirements. :

Siberian irises: These are a great choice for Zone 7, known for their easy care and ability to grow in a variety of soil types. They bloom in late spring to early summer and come in a range of blues, purples, yellows, and whites.

Bearded Iris: Also well-suited for Zone 7, bearded irises offer a wider array of colors and reblooming varieties. They are known for their dramatic blooms and can be a great choice for adding color to your garden. Reblooming varieties, like 'Immortality,' can offer blooms throughout the summer and into the fall.

Louisiana Iris: These irises prefer moist soil and thrive in low-lying areas like ponds or bogs. They have a wide range of colors due to their ability to hybridize, and their blooms appear in early spring.

Dwarf Crested Iris: These are native to North America and are known for their compact size and ability to spread by rhizomes. They bloom in shades of pale blue and purple with white and yellow markings.

Japanese Iris: These irises require acidic soil and prefer moist conditions. They have large, showy blooms and are known for their long vase life.

Daffodils

Thrive in USDA hardiness zone 7, and can be planted anytime between September and November. They need a moderately cold winter to complete their life cycle, making zones 5-7 ideal. In Zone 7, daffodils can bloom from late January through May.

Daffodils are perennials and can generally be left in the ground year-round. They will naturally die down after flowering and return the following spring. However, some conditions might necessitate lifting and storing them.

Dormancy: Daffodils are dormant in the fall and winter, with the leaves turning yellow and dying back.

Naturalization: Many daffodil varieties naturalize well, meaning they can be left in the ground and will multiply over time, creating larger clumps of flowers.

Hardiness: Daffodils are generally hardy and can survive winter temperatures in the ground.

Exceptions: If you live in an area with very wet or cold winters, or if you want to relocate the bulbs, you might need to dig them up and store them.

Best practices: After flowering, allow the foliage to die down naturally, then either leave the bulbs in the ground or dig them up for storage.

When to lift and store: Lifting and storing daffodils is usually recommended if you live north of USDA hardiness zone 3 or south of zone 7, or if you want to replant them in a different location. If you lift daffodils, you can "cure" them by letting them dry in a cool, dark, and well-ventilated place before storing them for replanting in the fall.

VEGETABLES: Some of the best performers in Zone 7 and 8 winters are arugulas, beets, swiss chard, mustard, cauliflower, radishes, spinach, broccoli, carrots, cabbage, peas, turnips, and varieties of lettuces. When shopping for seeds, keep a keen eye out for varieties that boast cold hardiness and have shorter maturation periods.