

HOME GROUNDS FACT SHEET



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Hints for Indoor Bulb Planting

Of all flower bulbs, hyacinth, paper-white narcissus and amaryllis are probably the easiest to bring into flower in an indoor garden. But, if you wish to enjoy the many colors and shapes of the total spring garden, you must try some other gems such as tulips, daffodils, *Crocus*, *Iris reticulata*, Muscari, Scilla, etc.

Coaxing spring flowering bulbs to bloom in the winter is commonly referred to as "indoor forcing." Actually, this is a misnomer; 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-spring span of 5 months. The requisite climate can be created by placing pots of bulbs in an indoor storage place where the temperature will stay between 40°F and 50°F (5°C and 10°C).

Rooting

The potted bulbs need a cold storage period of at least 12 weeks to develop roots, stem and bud. Rooting should be at temperatures of 40° to 50° F.

For Indoor Rooting

Place the pots in a cold cellar, old refrigerator, garage or outdoor shed where they won't freeze. Pots rooted indoors must be kept in complete darkness and watered regularly.

For Outdoor Rooting

Dig a bed deep enough to hold the pots and about 3 inches of sand. Spread an inch of sand or pebbles on the bed bottom for drainage. Set the pots and cover them with two inches of sand and a mound of about six inches of soil. Dig a small trench around the bed for water to run off. Water the bed regularly until freezing weather sets in. The containers can be buried in an outdoor trench, properly protected against excessive cold.



Containers For Forcing

Choose containers that reflect your decorating tastes. Metal, ceramic, plastic or clay will all do. Use paint, paper, seashells, or any other material to transform containers into attractive settings for your flowers. If new clay pots are used, soak them in water 24 hours before you use them. Forced bulbs require well-drained soil. Containers must have a drainage hole and be twice as deep as the bulb for roots to develop.

Soil For Forcing

Light soil is the key especially for drainage. Combine equal parts of weed-free garden or potting soil, peat and sand. (Don't use soil in which bulbs have been grown before.) And don't worry about fertilizer - the bulb contains all its own food. Apply a mulch of hay, straw, evergreen branches, etc. to prevent freezing and heaving.

Flowering

After a minimum of 12 weeks, the bulbs will have adequate root and sprout growth. The roots will be visible through the drainage hole and sprouts will be one to three inches tall. At this stage, the containers can be placed in a warmer environment. Place rooted pots in a 60°F semi-dark area. After four days the pots should be transferred to a well-lighted 65°F to 70°F area for flowers to bloom. Water regularly and keep pots away from heaters and drafts. Potted bulbs in bloom prefer cool locations: 60°F to 65°F for daffodils and *Crocus*, 65°F to 72°F for tulips and hyacinths (warmer temperatures will shorten their bloom). They enjoy full sunlight but should be moved to a cool location at night.

Reference: Cornell University Publication

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