

KPOV – *The Point*
Gardening: Get Good at It
“Planting Spring Bulbs”
October 23, 2018

As the days get shorter and the nights get colder, we set about the task of putting our abundant summer gardens to sleep for the winter. But before tucking away your trusty hand trowel, you may want to **consider adding some bulbs to your landscape**. After all, what is a more welcome sight after a long cold winter than spying bright egg-yolk yellow daffodils or delicately ornate purple grape hyacinths poking bravely through the thawing ground? Bulbs planted now in the Fall spend the Winter slowly establishing their root systems underground and then burst onto the scene often displaying the first pops of vivid Spring color.

Bulbs are a great fit for Central Oregon landscapes because they require a cold winter and they are dormant in the summer and as such they do not need any summer irrigation. Generally, it is best to plant bulbs when the soil temperature reaches below 60 degrees Fahrenheit but do make sure to get them in the ground well before it freezes for the winter. Anytime over the next 3 or 4 weeks would be the optimal time to get them in the ground. Bigger bulbs do correlate to bigger blooms so try and find some robust bulbs from a local nursery, reputable mail-order catalogue or online retailer. If you have the opportunity to examine them in person before purchasing choose the biggest in the group and make sure they don't have any soft, mushy or moldy spots.

Before discussing some ornamental options let's dig into one of my favorite culinary bulbs to grow at home – **garlic**! Did you know that there are many different varieties of garlic, each with their own unique flavor profile? Some are spicy, some are mild, some are wrapped in purple skins, some have a pink hue to them. Try experimenting with a few different varieties to see what works best for your taste. Garlic is very hardy, and it grows well in our climate.

The ornamental side of the garlic family – known as **Alliums** - are grown for their Dr Seuss like flowers which bring whimsy and interest to the landscape. This bulb puts up a single stem with a ball-shaped burst of small flowers, usually in shades of purple, pink and blue, more infrequently white. Bloom sizes vary widely from the 10-inch flowers of the Giant series to the tiny pops of one-inch drumstick alliums. Alliums are sun-lovers and prefer well-drained soil. They bloom in early summer and deer and rodents generally steer clear of them, so you can plant them with abandon. They are best planted among summer-blooming perennials that will hide their spent foliage which tends to get tattered well before their blooms lose their beauty.

If you're looking to bring some sweet fragrance to your Spring garden, you may want to consider the following two very aromatic bulb options. The **Common Garden Hyacinth** grows a short and columnar mass of waxy, densely-packed starfish-shaped florets and comes in almost any shade you can imagine. They can add a lot of color to your garden in a small amount of space and they have an intensely decadent aroma. The unrelated, but similarly named Grape Hyacinth is a petite plant whose delicateness belies its hardiness. It grows as a spike of small blue or purple bells and is reminiscent of fine beadwork. **Grape Hyacinths** tolerate any kind of soil and seem to return year after year without any additional care.

Another stalwart spring-blooming bulb is the **Daffodil**. Known for their deer and insect-resistance, tolerance for light shade and general low-maintenance requirements, daffodils can be the workhorse of the spring garden. You can find daffodils that go beyond the classic yellow trumpet variety. Double-daffodils are multi-petaled in the center and appear more rose-like in

form. Split-corona daffodils resemble a hibiscus and come with beautiful peach or coral accent petals. Daffodils are extremely long lived and will thrive in almost any location that offers decent drainage and at least a half day of sun.

So, go ahead and pop a few bulbs in your garden this Fall and you'll have a nice reward come springtime.

For more information on this and many other gardening topics, visit our Central Oregon Master Gardener website: gocomga.com and click on the KPOV tab on the orange bar. This has been Gardening: Get Good at It on KPOV's The Point.

Resources:

<https://extension.oregonstate.edu/news/go-underground-bulbs-colorful-spring-bloom>

<https://extension.oregonstate.edu/news/nows-time-plant-these-six-spring-flowering-bulbs>

<https://extension.oregonstate.edu/news/pot-some-bulbs-dream-spring>

<https://extension.oregonstate.edu/gardening/flowers-shrubs-trees/flowering-bulbs>