

Glossary of Bulb like Structures

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The term "bulbs" is used to collectively describe any thick root-like structure that is planted in the ground. When in reality many of the things we plant are not really bulbs.

Bulb - a bulb is an underground stem that is surrounded with modified leaves called scales. The modified leaves are used to store food. The root grows from the basal plate or modified stem. Some types of bulbs:

Allium - this is the onion family

Amaryllis

Hyacinths

Iris reticulata

Muscari

Narcissus

Scillia

Tulip

Daffodil

Corms - these are like bulbs but lack the fleshy scales (modified leaves). The corm is a solid mass. Botanically they are the swollen base of a stem axis enclosed by dry scale-like leaves. As the corm grows it will shrivel up and form a new one to the top or side of the old corm. Some plants will form cormlets. Some types of corms:

Crocus

Fressia

Glads

Tubers - swollen terminal portions of an under-ground stolon. A stolon is a horizontal stem such as on a strawberry plant. Some types of tubers:

Anemone

Caladium

Cyclamen

Rannunculus

Sinningia

Rhizomes - these are thick horizontal running stems that are just at the surface of the soil or just underneath. Roots grow from the bottom of the tuber and buds along the side or on top. Some types of rhizomes:

Cannas

Convallaria - Lily of the Valley

Bearded Iris – (not Siberian)

Begonia

Tuberous roots - tuberous roots look like tubers, which are under ground stems, but are actually thick swollen underground roots. Some types of tubers:

Alstromeria

Begonia

Dahlia

Sweet Potato

