

# Landscaping with spring flowering bulbs

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Bulbs are a must to usher in the spring. Properly used and planted they can be a worthwhile investment in color.

## Where to landscape with bulbs

In general put the bulbs where “you the planter” can enjoy them without have to trek across the yard to see them. Many spring days are not good trekking days!!! This is especially important when using the smaller minor bulbs. If the planting area is at a distance, mass the bulbs together for a greater mass of color.

1. In among perennials and ground covers:  
This is requires the least amount of maintenance.  
As the bulbs finish their growth cycle and die back the perennials will fill in.  
Combine with early flowering perennials.
2. In among shrubs:  
As the bulbs finish their growth cycle and die back, the shrubs will leaf out and fill in.  
Combine the bulbs with shrubs that leaf out early such as Barberry or flower early such as Forsythia, PJM Azalea, etc.
3. In formal beds followed by annuals  
Unless the bulbs are used as a “one shot” plant this is easier said than done.  
The bulbs will get in the way and have a period of ugliness as they die back and the annuals are too small to fill in.  
This method is best accomplished if the bulbs are plants to the back of the bed and if possible segregated within the annual garden.
4. Naturalized in lawns:  
The lawn must not be cut until the bulbs have completed their growth cycle
5. Naturalizing among trees and shrubs:

## Planting

Bed preparation is essential for long-term success with your bulbs. Breaking up the soil and adding organic matter helps. The traditional way is to punch holes for each individual bulb. Another method is to dig the area out, place the bulbs in the larger hole and cover with soil. This works best when planting in drifts or a larger number of bulbs are being planted in a smaller area, as in

commercial plantings. The easiest way to kill bulbs is to plant in poorly drained soil.

Depth of planting:

The depth will vary from bulb to bulb. Many of your major bulbs will be from 4-8" deep where as minor bulbs 2-4". Most bulbs come with information on the depth of planting.

Spacing:

The spacing will vary from bulb to bulb. Tulips and daffodils may be planted 3-7 per square foot, where as minor bulbs 2" on center and a few dozen per square foot. Most bulbs are sold with information on spacing.

Fertilize

Fertilize with bone meal, fortified bone meal, bulb booster mixes or milorganite at the time of planting. I like to have a bucket with soil and fertilizer mixed and use this to back fill the planting hole.

Watering:

Water only if the fall is very dry and in your opinion the bulbs are in dry soil.

Planting in drifts:

This is a method of planting that can maximize your investment. Instead of planting in small groups or individual plants scattered around drifts are a better option. Daffodils can be planted in drifts by planting 5-7 bulbs in a small drift and then plant another drift a short distance away.