



# MASTER GARDENER

COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY  
EXTENSION

## Year Round Gardening

### **Dramatic Additions to Your Spring Bulbs**

Fredricka Bogardus, Colorado Master Gardener

Mid to late September is a great time to add some hardy bulbs to your garden for early spring color. Tulips, daffodils and crocus are great choices, but other varieties can add some pizzazz to your spring blooms.

Fritillaria bulbs feature downward facing bell shaped flowers. *Fritillaria imperialis* features foliage that sticks up above the blooms, like messy hair. Colors range from yellows to reds, *Fritillaria meleagras* features petals that have a reptilian look, giving them the common descriptor of snake heads. Color is off white to mauve. *Meleagras* is unique in that it thrives in shade.

Large alliums, like *Allium schubertii* and *Allium christophii*, are a good addition to your summer garden.



*Photo courtesy of Fredricka Bogardus*

For a prolific ground cover in shades of blue and purple consider grape hyacinths. These mid spring blooms will tolerate shade and sunny locations.

Bulbs are best planted in drifts or clumps. When planting, try to plant the bulbs behind plants that will grow tall enough to hide the fading foliage after the bulbs bloom. Small

shrubs or herbaceous perennials are good choices. It is important that you allow the foliage on bulbs to die back before you cut it back. As long as it is green, the bulb is still storing energy for next year's blooms.

The general guideline for bulb planting depth is that you multiply the height of the bulb by 5 and dig a hole that deep. Then place the bulb in that, hole tip side pointing up. The tip is the pointy end, sometimes you may see a bit of stem emerging, the base is the flatter end which sometimes will have some roots visible. You may read instructions that planting the bulb tip side up is unimportant because the plant will know which way to grow. While that may be true, our goal as gardeners is to encourage what we plant to grow, not to test the limits of nature! You can add a bit of high phosphorous fertilizer (0-46-0) at the bottom of the planting hole. Fill the hole in with soil and mulch lightly with shredded bark, peat moss or shredded leaves. Water the bulbs up until the ground freezes.

For more information on planting spring bulbs check out the CSU Extension Fact Sheet Fall-Planted Bulbs and Corms – 7.410 <https://extension.colostate.edu/topic-areas/yard-garden/fall-planted-bulbs-and-corms-7-410/>.

While you are bulb shopping don't forget to pick up some amaryllis bulbs for holiday season cheer. These bulbs make a great calorie free holiday gift or a really great floral display for your home. The bulbs can be stored in the crisper section of a refrigerator until you are ready to plant them. For late December blooms plant them between November 1<sup>st</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup>. For details about these bulbs, check out the University of Minnesota fact sheet Growing and caring for amaryllis. <https://extension.umn.edu/houseplants/amaryllis>

When you have questions, Colorado State University Extension has research-based answers. The Help Desk is open at 17 N. Spruce St. Hours are 9 a.m. to noon and 1 to 4 p.m. Mondays and Wednesdays. Call 520-7684 or email [CSUmg2@elpasoco.com](mailto:CSUmg2@elpasoco.com).