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NATURALIZING *BULBS*

By Linda Gay
Horticulturist

Most people ask me what is my favorite plant. I have to ask what time of year?

More often than not, bulbs are my favorite. They surprise me as I forgot I had planted them until I see green noses push from the soil.

"Naturalizing" means they return every year with larger bulbs and bigger flowers. Not all bulbs are naturalizing.

Since bulbs go dormant (the foliage is not up year round) and need to be protected while "sleeping" in the soil, you have to remember where you put them or protect them in a flower bed that is constantly changing.

One trick: I put a "buddy plant" next to them to protect them from me wielding a shovel!

Most Frequently asked Questions:

HOW DEEP DO I PLANT BULBS?

General rule: twice the depth of the bulb. If the bulb is 1.5" from nose to roots, plant 3" deep. Hyacinths and tulips do NOT naturalize. Plant them 6" deep in January. Store in fridge until planting.

WHEN CAN I PLANT BULBS?

Plant immediately after purchasing or receiving them. Bulbs out of soil dehydrate and shrink until dead.

WHEN DO I DIVIDE BULBS?

Normally after 3 years, the clump becomes very large and inhibits flowering. Divide when the "noses" start to emerge from the soil.

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*Yellow Lycoris traubii and red L. radiata (spider lilies)
thrive in Linda's garden with orange cuphea.*

Some of my favorite bulbs are:

AZTEC LILY (*Sprekelia*) - is a 3-4" blood red flower that looks like a star. Blooms in spring and fall (March and October). Plant so the bulb necks are above the top of the soil as this bulb doesn't go dormant.

SPIDER LILY (*Lycoris traubii* and *L. radiata*) -- both are fall bloomers, yellow traubii blooms quickly when planted. The red takes 2 years when divided to bloom.

NARCISSUS is one of the earliest spring flowering bulbs with several fragrant varieties. 'Campernelle', 'Golden Dawn', and 'Grand Primo'.

LILY -- my favorite late spring, early summer blooming bulb. I love the Orientals such as 'Stargazer' and 'White Stargazer', next is 'Triumphator' which is a hybrid of oriental and Asiatic lilies and very fragrant and grows 6' tall without staking!

Everyone should get to know and grow **RAINLILIES**, *Zephyranthes candida*, *Z. rosea*, and *Habranthus robustus* are 3 good ones to whet your appetite and yes they bloom after rains.

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