



FACT SHEET

Bulbs in Containers

The best of both worlds, bulbs in containers allow us to provide the good drainage essential for most bulbs and the advantage of mobility. Move the pots to a feature position when they flower, and hide them from view when the foliage is dying back and looking messy. Fragrant bulbs can be brought indoors for enjoyment when flowering.

Creating great displays

Bulbs in pots can be planted within 1 or 2 cm of each other to achieve a greater impact when flowering. Forget the normal rules for bulb spacing - pots are open to light all around the edges so with a good mixture and adequate fertiliser, there is not the competition for either light or nutrients that necessitates greater spacing in a garden situation.



Make up mixed containers with large bulbs such as daffodils in the lowest layer half way down, tulips in a layer above and finally a top layer of smaller bulbs such as muscari (grape hyacinths) or crocuses. Each bulb type flowers at a different time, making your container a long lasting spring display.

Stunning displays can be made by close planting of bulbs such as tulips or hyacinths to completely fill a container.



Use the same variety of bulb right through the container for the greatest impact. A large half barrel of purple or red tulips, or a container of deep blue hyacinths in full bloom are very powerful garden features.

Choosing the right bulbs

Some of the most suitable bulbs for containers are bluebells, crocus, daffodils (especially miniatures), freesias, hyacinths, lachenalia, muscari and tulips.

Planting – when and how

Container planting should be done in autumn at much the same time that you would plant bulbs in the garden. Select pots that are deep enough for the bulbs being planted – large bulbs such as daffodils and tulips need at least 12 cm of mixture beneath them. Use a good quality bulb mixture. It must be well drained, but have enough fine material to keep the bulbs nicely moist and allow uninterrupted growth. It should also contain some 8–9 month slow release fertiliser to cater for the bulbs needs right through to flowering and beyond.

Care while growing

Pots warm up and cool down quickly. Newly planted pots need to be kept in a cool shady place for several months to allow time for good root development. They need only minimal watering at this time too; enough to keep the mixture just moist, as there is no active top growth occurring yet. Bring them out into the stronger light and then direct sun when the first shoots emerge, and water a little more frequently.

Flowering

During flowering, water more often as the containers will dry out much more quickly now. There is little else needed at this stage, move the contained into a more visible position and enjoy the display.



Care after flowering

If you want to keep the bulbs for next year, put the containers away out of sight and allow the leaves to die back naturally. Dig the bulbs up in summer when they have dried off completely. Store them in a cool, airy place until replanting the following autumn.

If you treat your bulbs as annuals however, you can clear the container out for other uses right after flowering, and start again with a whole new selection next autumn.