

All About Bulbs

FROM LILIES TO TULIPS, flowering bulbs are a versatile garden staple. With such a wide array of colors, shapes, and sizes, there are bulbs to suit every home garden.

Technically speaking, bulbs are geophytes, which are herbaceous plants with underground storage organs. Many flowers we traditionally refer to as bulbs are actually not produced from true bulbs, at all. Corms, tubers, and roots all fall under the geophyte category. For example, crocuses and freesia are really corms. Corms and bulbs are very similar, but their main difference is the manner they store food. Although the two are nearly identical, corms are generally flatter than true, round bulbs. Flowers like dahlias and begonias are tubers, which are actually enlarged stem tissue. Tubers and roots are easier to tell apart from bulbs, as they do not have a protective layer. Tubers and roots can come in a variety of shapes, from round to flat to clusters. All geophytes have one thing in common; they all need a dormant period, which varies by season depending on the plant. Using the term bulb to refer to all of these flowers is commonly accepted, as bulb has come to mean any plant which has the capacity to store food underground.

Bulbs like daffodils, crocus, and tulips are considered cold-weather hardy, meaning they can be planted before the cold sets in and will bloom after snow melts. The timing of planting bulbs is crucial for root development and cold weather survival. Tender bulbs, such as amaryllis and caladiums, are more temperature sensitive. After the growing season, these bulbs need to be carefully dug up and stored in a cool, dry place until temperatures warm up and the ground thaws. If you take care

