

Bulbs, Corms, and More Bulbs

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Bulb crops can be profitable additions to a cut flower farm. Different bulbs can be grown and harvested throughout the year. From lilies planted year round, tulips from December through early May, and other crops planted in spring and summer, bulbs and corms can be planted for harvesting virtually every week of the year..

Tulip

Plant programmed, bulbs from November to January in ground beds or crates for blooms December – March in a heated greenhouse. Regular tulips can be forced a few weeks earlier if planted in the fall in an open tunnel. Close the tunnel in early February and the tulips will be ready about three weeks before tulips grown in the open field. Alternatively, plant tulips in the open field and put up a temporary tunnel over them in early February. Field grown tulips can be planted using a “trench method”. Harvest daily, picking when flower buds first show color. Tulips should not be planted in the same bed again. Tulips are treated as a “one time” crop. More tulip growing info can be found at:

https://extension.umd.edu/sites/default/files/_docs/programs/ipmnet/FS837TulipsAsCutFlowers-Commercial.pdf

Ranunculus

Plant corms in tunnels in October for spring bloom, or in heated greenhouse for flowers for late December through spring. Rehydrate corms before planting. May be pre sprouted, or planted direct in beds. Use row cover over high tunnel beds for “warmth” until growth resumes in spring. Harvest when flowers are about ½ open.

Anemones

Same culture as ranunculus. First blooms are usually short, subsequent flowers will be taller. Harvest when the little green collar on the stem is about ¼” below the flower.

Hyacinth

Plant in crates, provide the required cooling of 12+ weeks, then grow in a lower light area to encourage longer flower stems. Hyacinth are harvested by pulling the flower, bulb and all, then slicing off the bulb, leaving the basal plate intact. Harvest when flower spikes are tall, showing color, before the flowers are open. Crates of plants can be held in the cooler for weeks, harvesting as needed.

Dutch Iris.

Plant bulbs in field in the fall. Blooms in June. Pick when flower shows color, but not yet open. Dutch iris store well in the cooler if picked early. Bulbs in the field can be left for future years, but quality is reduced.

Freesia.

Plant programmed bulbs in a heated greenhouse from November to January for blooms late March – April. Support netting needed. Pick when first flower is starting to open.

Daffodil

Plant bulbs in the field in the fall, for early spring flowers. Be sure you have a place to sell flowers early in the season. Daffodils will usually be blooming in mid-March. Unique colors and varieties command a higher price. Can be planted in crates or pots, given 12+ weeks of cold, then forced for early harvest. Field planted bulbs are productive for several years.

Allium

Plant bulbs in the field in the fall for flowers the following June. Purple sensation is an affordable, medium sized flower that works well as a cut flower. Schubertii is crazy looking variety that has a huge, airy flower, on a medium height stem. Sphaerocephalon (Drum Stick Allium) is a small flower on long stems that is good as a filler in bouquets. Gladiator and Globemaster have large flowers on tall stems, but are usually too costly to grow profitably as a cut flower. If Allium is allowed to go to seed, there is a market for the green seed pods. Foliage dies back by mid-summer. Bulbs are productive for many years.

Ornithogalum

Grow in a heated greenhouse (40 degree minimum nights) from November – April, or a high tunnel in zones 8+ over the winter. Grow in crates, or ground beds. Bulbs can be saved for next season. Cut stems last 2-4 weeks.

Tuberose

Plant from early June, to mid-July. Mexican Single flowers are highly scented. Bulbs need to be dug and stored in a frost free place. Plants will form clumps of bulbs that should be divided before replanting the following season.

Gladiolus

May be succession planted from early May through early July for continuous harvest from July through frost. Harvest when flower spike starts to show color. Bulbs will multiply and may over winter in zone 7, but can be dug and stored frost free to ensure survival.

Calla

Plant year round in greenhouses, or outdoors from May through August. May overwinter in zone 7 or higher. Dig and store in colder areas. Bulbs come treated with gibberellic acid to increase flower count. Reapply to old bulbs in the spring.

Lily

Programmed lilies are available from wholesale bulb sellers year round. Bulbs have received their “winter” cooling, and are stored frozen at 29 degrees by the supplier until time to ship to the customer. Lilies can be grown outdoors or in tunnels during summer months, or in a greenhouse year round. Planted in a tunnel or greenhouse, lilies are protected from rain and deer – two of the most devastating problems with lilies. Lilies can be planted very early in a tunnel, as early as late February for a spring crop, and as late as mid-August for a fall crop. Choose season appropriate colors and varieties. If left in the tunnel, in following years they will bloom in early summer, a little earlier than in the field. Lilies grown in crates are usually a “one time” crop. More lily growing info can be found at:

<http://www.wnc.edu/files/departments/ce/sci/04pohlac.pdf>

Dahlias

Grown from tubers, or rooted cuttings planted in late spring or early summer. Sturdy support is needed to prevent plant from falling over. Dahlias come in hundreds of varieties or every color and many shapes, making them good for weddings and events. Tubers are usually dug and stored in zone 7 or colder, or protected Wollam Gardens style with mini tunnels.

Liatris

Corms can be planted from mid April through mid July to extend the harvest window. Will overwinter and bloom in mid summer in future years. Available in white and purple..