

Fritillaria - Calla - Hyacinth

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Dave Dowling

dave@ednieflowerbulb.com

Fritillaria, Calla, and Hyacinth are just a few of the many varieties of cut flowers that can be grown from bulbs. Like all bulbs, they can have a high investment cost, and a high rate of return. However, a grower will need to be able to sell all of each crop planted, or any hope of a profit will be quickly erased. This is even more important to remember for "one and done" crops like hyacinth where you don't get a second chance to make back your investment. It's important to figure out how much you can potentially sell before planting large quantities of bulbs.

Fritillaria for Cut Flowers

Fritillaria need good soil that drains well, especially in the summer after they have gone dormant. Warm and dry summers are best. Start with big bulbs, 20cm and up. Plant in full sun. Deer resistant. Vase life 5-7 days. Reliable perennial in USDA Zones 6-8

Persica (Persian Bells) Plant 6" deep Height 24-36"

Harvest when flower stalk is 1/3 to 1/2 open

Imperialis (Crown Imperial) Plant bulbs 10-12" deep Height 36-48"

Harvest when flowers are about to open

Meleagris (Checkered Lily, Snake's Head) Plant 3" deep Height 12-20"

Harvest when flowers have just opened

Calla for Cut Flowers

Zantedeschia, or Callas can be grown in pots, crates, ground beds, or the field. One bulb per gallon pot, five bulbs per crate, 12" spacing in the field. Harvest by "pulling" the flower, do not cut. Leaves can also be used. Handle bulbs gently.

Bruises and scratches can lead to Erwinia, a bacterial rot, much like rotten potatoes. When tubers arrive, unpack the tubers and allow them to "rest" 3-4 days before planting to allow shipping damage to heal over and cure. Cover with 2-3" soil.

Use 3-4" soil under the bulbs when planting in pots or crates. Water really well when planting, then no more water until they have roots and leaves to use the water. It's OK for the soil to be dry at this stage. After flowers start to appear, water more often, several times a week. Grow on the ground, not up on benches to help keep the soil cool. For summer plantings, cover the soil with a 2-3" layer of loose straw to shade the soil and keep soil cooler. 50% shade cloth in summer will increase stem length.

Flowers start blooming about 7-8 weeks after planting, and continue for 3-4 weeks. Flower hold on the plant for 7-10 days, and in the cooler another 7-10 days. Choose taller varieties sold for cut flowers, not smaller, shorter varieties used as potted plants. Larger, size 20/22 bulbs produce more stems than smaller bulbs and are worth the higher price. Hardy zone 8/9.

Vase life 7-10 or more.

Hyacinth

Plant in crates, bulb-to-bulb, 45-60 per crate. 3" of soil under bulb, 3-4" above the bulb. Water thoroughly, then provide 3-4 weeks of approximately 50 degrees to grow roots, then 8-10 weeks at 30-34 degrees for a total of cooling period of 12+ weeks. Grow in a lower light area to encourage longer flower stems. Shade with newspaper, or grow under benches in cool greenhouse or tunnel, 45-55 nights. Hyacinth are harvested by pulling the flower, bulb and all, then slicing off the bulb, leaving the basal plate intact. Can also be cleaned and sold with the bulb attached. Harvest when flower spikes are tall, showing color, but before the flowers are open. Crates of plants ready to harvest can be watered well then held in the cooler for 4+ weeks, harvesting as needed. Hyacinth cause can cause itching. Wear gloves, or hose off bulbs and work with them wet. Use size 16/17 or larger bulbs. Vase life 5-7 days.