

February 2023 Gardener's Corner

By Cate White, SJ County Master Gardener

Summer Bulbs

When most of us think of bulbs, we think of daffodils, tulips, hyacinths, freesias and others that should be planted in the Fall. However, there is an entirely different category of summer blooming bulbs that are usually planted in late winter or early spring in our area. Many of these produce beautiful flowers so they are worth getting to know. Below, I've listed a few, along with a some of their characteristics and cultural requirements. Unless otherwise noted, plant in full sun.

- **Amaryllis (naked lady):** plant in February, with the tops of the bulb just even or slightly above soil level. Blooms appear in late summer six weeks after foliage dies back.
- **Begonia (tuberous):** tubers should be planted March through May, keeping bulb tops even with the soil. Best grown in containers in filtered shade or areas with morning sun only. Bloom summer into fall. When they die back in fall, lift tubers and store in a cool dry place for replanting next spring.
- **Calla Lily:** both white and colored dwarf varieties: Plant the larger white rhizomes four to six inches deep, and the smaller dwarf rhizomes two inches deep. Spring and summer blooms. These plants need shade and year-round moisture.
- **Canna:** plant rhizomes February through April two to four inches deep. They can also be grown in large pots. Bloom summer through fall. Cut each stem to the ground after blooming.
- **Crocsmia:** corms should be planted in February, about 2 inches deep. They will bloom in spring and summer and make good cut flowers.
- **Dahlia:** these popular flowers grow from tuberous roots best planted February through May. Plant them three inches deep with eyes facing up. For larger staked varieties, plant with the eye just touching the stake. Great cut flowers. Appreciates some afternoon shade. Bloom summer into fall. Lift every few years after they die back in late fall to divide and replant in spring.
- **Gladiolus:** another popular plant that produces good flowers for cutting. Plant corms in succession over a six-week period from February through April for a longer blooming period. Planting depth should be four times deeper than the height of the corm. Can bloom spring summer and fall.
- **Hippeastrum (Giant Amaryllis):** plant this bulb in pots slightly bigger than the bulb with the upper half of the bulb above the soil surface. Water all summer until leaves turn yellow, then let pot dry out. Bloom in late summer. These bulbs are often forced for Christmas bloom.



Calla Lilies



Dahlias

- **Lily:** These bulbs come in many varieties with variable bloom times. Plant February through March. Small bulbs should be planted two to three inches deep, medium bulbs three to four inches deep, and large bulbs at a depth of four to six inches. Require moisture year-round. While they produce beautiful flowers, keep in mind that all parts of the plant (including the pollen) are poisonous, especially for cats. Bloom summer into fall.



Lily

- **Polianthes tuberosa (Tuberose):** plant the rhizomes two inches deep February through April. Sweet smelling white flowers appear in summer and fall. These should bloom year after year in our area.

Most of the information for this article comes from the **Sacramento Master Gardeners Bulb Planting Schedule**, https://sacmg.ucanr.edu/Sacramento_Bulb_Planting_Schedule/. Many varieties of bulbs are listed on this chart, so it is worth looking it up for more information. Another source, The Sunset Western Garden Book also provides excellent information about individual bulb varieties. So have fun exploring the world of summer blooming bulbs!

February Garden Checklist

- Plant bare root shrubs and trees, like roses and fruit trees
- Continue baiting for ants, snails, slugs and earwigs
- Monitor for Asian citrus psyllid
- Prune deciduous trees and shrubs such as fruit trees, crepe myrtle and roses. Remove dead, diseased wood, making cuts properly to encourage good structure. Spray with horticultural oil to control insects and diseases. Spray peaches to prevent peach leaf curl one more time before bud break.
- Cut back deciduous sages such as Mexican sage to within 6-8 inches from the ground. Cut back fountain grasses to within 18 inches to 2 feet off the ground.
- Plant seedlings of broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower and lettuce and parsley. Plant beets, chard, carrots and peas from seed. Spring flowering plant starts such as violas, pansies, snapdragons and Iceland poppies can also be planted now. Sweet peas can be planted from seed.
- Continue adjusting irrigation according to the weather. Do not water within 48 hours of measurable rain.