

Forcing Bulbs



October is the perfect month to start forcing bulbs for winter flowering. A few blooming bulbs can really raise your spirits during the cold winter.

Planting

Pot up the bulbs using regular potting soil. Put them in plastic pots that will fit into your more decorative ceramic pots. That way you can switch out flowers and use your nice pots throughout the

Good Bulbs for Forcing

Tulips	Crocus
Daffodils	Scillas
Hyacinths	Lily of the valley

season. Leave the pointy tips of the bulbs exposed and cover the soil surface with ½” of sand for decoration and to keep fungus gnats away. When handling the bulbs, make sure they don't get over 65 degrees. Water emidiently after planting and keep the bulbs moist thereafter.

Cooling

Bulbs need to have a prolonged period of darkness and cool temperatures of between 35° to 45° (see table at right).

You can keep the bulbs in a cold frame, unheated garage or garden shed in a box where sunlight can't get to them. You can even use your refrigerator as long as there is no fruit in there with them and you cover the bulbs with a plast sack with air holes. Water the bulbs once a month while they are chiling.

Cooling Times

Tulips	14-16 weeks
Hyacinth	10-18 weeks
Daffodils	12-16 weeks
Crocus	10-12 weeks
Scillas	10-12 weeks
Amaryllis	No chilling
Paperwhites	No chilling



Displaying

Mark your calendar so you remember when to remove the bulbs from their cooling place. Bulbs usually bloom 2 to 3 weeks after the cooling period. Don't expose them to warm temperatures too soon or they will try to bloom too fast and the blooms will fail before they open. For the first week or two, place the bulbs in a cool, bright location with a temperature of 50–60°. Once they start to open, they can be moved to warmer locations such as the living room.