

With a burst of color that brightens any winter day, some bulbs flower through the last of the snow. With planning, you can have bulbs blooming periodically from spring into November. Try them massed as a single color, or mixed.

Whether you select a darwin or species tulip, exuberant crocus, stately hyacinth, glorious glory-of-the-snow, or some other bulb-like flower, knowing a bit about your favorite bulbs will help you put the right one in the right place. Be sure you know when the bulb will bloom and whether it prefers sun or shade. Is it hardy enough to be left in the ground through the winter, or is it tender enough that it must be dug up and stored?

No matter where you put the plants, keep scale and color in mind. Tall *Allium giganteum* might look silly standing in a small pot or towering over ground-hugging flowers, for example. And a cluster of kaufmanniana tulips wouldn't provide transition between a ground cover and flowering crab apple tree (but darwin tulips might).

### **Investigate first**

A little paperwork before you order bulbs will pay off for years, and a few notes through the seasons will keep you an enthusiast. Record flowering dates, plants that go together well (in your garden and in those of other gardeners), and the performance of plants. Write down areas that could be brightened with a bulb flower. Then, depending on the time of year when you need a spot or sweep of color, you can plant one or more of these.

Very early: Crocus (especially *Crocus korolkowi*), glory-of-the-snow (*chionodoxa*), *Anemone blanda*, puschkinia, eranthis (winter aconite), galanthus (snowdrop), and *Iris reticulata*..

Early: Squill, grape hyacinth, species tulips (*kaufmanniana* and *fosterana*), single early tulips, hyacinths, and dwarf daffodils.

Mid-spring: Daffodils (*Narcissus jonquilla*), tulips (*greigi*, *mendel*, *cottage*, *triumph*, and darwin hybrid), and fritillaria.

Late spring: Tulips (*darwin*, *lily-flowered*, *parrot*, and *double late*).

The allium family dramatically fills in a flowering border during that "difficult age," when tulips and other traditional features fade. Alliums are showstoppers of tiny, star-shaped flowers massed in rounded heads that measure up to a foot across, depending on variety.

The season is delicately extended with petite, front-of-the-border flowers. The *sternbergia*, fall crocus, and *colchicum* still bloom as autumn leaves fall and provide the last outdoor flower color until spring.