

Unlike the hardy bulbs, tender bulbs must be dug and stored for the winter in all but the mildest parts of the U.S. The fall activity makes a lovely excuse for you to be outdoors in the brisk air, as birds and winter-dreading Northerners head south.

For generations, gardeners have included digging and storing tender bulbs, such as the dahlia, gladiolus, and caladium, as a fall clean-up job. The benefits come each spring: whether new or replanted, tender bulbs give peak performance the same season. Plant after the weather is dependably warm. They will bloom and flourish in the heat of summer when other flowers lag.

For success the first year, buy bulbs that are healthy. Results in future years depend on you. Apply a complete fertilizer at planting time and a side-dressing when blooms appear. This encourages a good growth of foliage to feed next year's bulb.

Although tender bulbs have much in common, they require different care. Tips for the most popular ones are included in this section.