

There is Still Time to Plant Spring-Flowering Bulbs

By Ward Upham, Kansas State University



Generally, it is recommended to plant hardy bulbs (especially daffodils) by early October to give them enough time to root before winter. But it is certainly not too late to get them planted now. As long as the soil temperatures are above 40 degrees F, the bulbs should continue their root development.

Soil temperatures across Kansas last week averaged from the 50s to the low 60s.

Although many of the best bulbs have probably already been purchased, garden centers may still have a good selection. Be sure to select large, firm bulbs that have not begun to sprout.

While many bulbs can adapt to a wide range of soil types, none can tolerate poorly drained soil. Prepare the planting bed by adding organic matter such as peat moss, well-rotted manure, or compost. Adequate fertility is essential. It is best to rely on a soil test to determine what nutrients are needed. Garden soils that have been regularly fertilized in the past may have excess levels of phosphorus. Excess phosphorus can interfere with the uptake of essential micronutrients. In such cases, it would be better to use a fertilizer relatively high in nitrogen such as a 29-5-4, 27-3-3 or something similar. Fertilizers such as the above should be applied at the rate of 2/3 pound per 100 square feet. In the absence of a soil test or if phosphorus is needed, add a low analysis, balanced fertilizer such as 5-10-5 or 6-10-4 at the rate of 2 to 3 pounds per 100 square feet of bed. Mix all amendments thoroughly with the soil before planting the bulbs.

The size and the species of the bulb determines how deep to plant. In general, the depth to the bottom of the bulb should be about 2 to 3 times the size of the bulb, but check the planting instructions specific to each particular flower

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