



## Summer Bulbs in Containers

Summer blooming bulbs are heat-lovers. Growing them in pots is an excellent way to jump-start the summer season.

### Step-by-Step Success

- Don't wait until the soil warms up to plant your tender bulbs! Start them early and then move them into the garden, sinking them, pot and all, into the soil. Or place the pots in a pretty cachepot and enjoy them on your porch or patio.
- With the exception of lilies and canna, these bulbs won't survive the winter cold — so keeping them in pots will make it easier for you to dig them and bring them inside next September.
- Once they are potted up, they should be kept in a sunny, protected location such as a south-facing window, sunroom or greenhouse until overnight temperatures are consistently above 50°, when they may be moved outside.
- Bulbs are happier left undisturbed so choose light-weight containers suitable for the ultimate size of the plant. Follow the minimum size guidelines listed on the following page, remembering that larger pots will give the plants more room to develop.
- Fill containers with equal parts of *Espoma Potting Mix*, *Dr. Earth Mother Land Compost*, and *Turface*, to ensure good drainage and fertility. That may seem like a lot of *Turface*, but it will help protect the bulbs from rotting.
- Add a slow-release fertilizer such as *Espoma BulbTone 3-5-3*. In subsequent springs, just scratch it into the soil surface.
- Bulbs do better when potted separately so they receive individualized care. With a collection of different varieties, you can switch out the pots throughout the summer to highlight flowers when they bloom.
- Pre-moisten the planting mix and amendments and place the bulbs at the correct depth, firming the soil around them.
- Dahlias and lilies will require support and stakes should be installed at planting time and kept in the pots permanently.
- In early spring, when it is still relatively cool and the plants are small, water needs will be minimal.
- Remember that overwatering may keep the potting mix too wet and lead to rot.
- As the roots fill the pot and temperatures rise, increase watering as needed. Daily watering may become necessary.
- These are high-energy plants. Toward the end of spring, begin to supplement with a water-soluble fertilizer such as *Jack's Bloom Booster 10-30-20* every other week until the end of summer.
- Most summer-blooming bulbs need a rest period. Bring them inside before any risk of frost and let them dry out.
- Put the pots in a dry, dark place kept at room temperature — under the basement stairs is ideal.
- Depending on the plant, the foliage will turn yellow and soft or tan and crisp — just pull it off with a slight tug.
- Some plants are equally happy spending their downtime as a houseplant — see notes in the list.
- After two to three years in its pot, you may wish to refresh the plant. Take it out of its pot, knocking off loose soil without breaking up the main root mass, and gently replace it in the same pot with a fresh combination of potting mix, compost and *Turface*.

## A few of our Favorite Summer Bulbs

Botanical/Common Name	Pot Size	Light	Notes
<i>Alocasia</i> , <i>Colocasia</i> , and <i>Xanthosoma</i> / Elephant Ears	1 per 12" pot	Sun, Part Sun, Shade	Easy to overwinter; low maintenance; likes heat, humidity and moisture; some may winter well as houseplants, others prefer to be stored dry in pots.
<i>Begonia</i> (Tuberosa Group)	3 per 15" pot	Sun, Part Sun, Shade	Easy to grow; dislikes heat and humidity; upright or cascading forms; keep moist until flowering ceases in autumn; store dry in pots.
<i>Caladium</i>	1 per 8" pot	Sun, Part Sun, Shade	Easy to grow; needs warmth and humidity; likes fertile soil and even moisture; start early in smaller pot with bottom heat; sometimes treated as an annual.
<i>Canna</i>	1 per 12" pot	Sun	Low maintenance; needs room to grow; loves heat; no staking needed; blooms midsummer to frost; deadhead regularly; plant directly in the garden to perennialize.
<i>Dahlia</i>	1 per 8" pot	Sun, Part Sun, Shade	Needs space and regular watering; protect from too much heat with double pot and/or mulch; great cut flower; deadhead regularly.
<i>Lilium</i> / Lily	3 per 12" pot	Sun, Part Sun, Shade	Easy to overwinter; plant promptly and deeply after purchase; protect from too much heat with double pot and/or mulch; fragrant cut flower.
<i>Oxalis</i> / False Shamrock	5 per 6" pot	Sun, Part Sun, Shade	Easy to overwinter; low maintenance; long blooming; needs regular moisture; great companion for taller bulbs; bring in as a winter houseplant.
<i>Polianthes tuberosa</i> / Tuberose	3 per 10" pot	Sun, Part Sun, Shade	Easy to overwinter; low maintenance; loves warmth, moisture and fertilizer; divide every two years; allow dormancy after flowering.
<i>Zantedeschia</i> / Calla	3 per 12" pot	Sun, Part Sun, Shade	Easy to overwinter; keep moist; likes fertilizer; long-lasting, classic cut flower that blooms from mid-summer to frost; deadhead promptly.

Some of the above information was adapted from Brent and Becky's *Summer Flowering Bulbs Cultural Instructions* which can be found at [https://www.brentandbeckysbulbs.com/resources/show\\_list/id/20](https://www.brentandbeckysbulbs.com/resources/show_list/id/20) .