

Autumn 2011

The Four Seasons

Hardin County Extension Service Horticulture Newsletter

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Plant Your Tulips Right Here

Purchasing Bulbs

Bulbs are generally graded by size. If you wish to force bulbs into bloom indoors, purchase only top size bulbs. Bulbs that are classified as bedding or have a smaller diameter may be quite satisfactory for the garden. Purchase bulbs from a reliable dealer. If an advertisement seems too good to be true, it probably is. Advertisements for a very large number of bulbs at an incredibly low price usually indicate that small bulbs are being offered. These small bulbs may or may not produce blooms.

If you are purchasing bulbs at a local garden center, choose bulbs that have no obvious bruising and feel firm and “heavy.” Bulbs that feel “light” by comparison may have dried out and will not likely produce a desirable plant. The tunic (like an onion skin) on true bulbs may not be intact. This does not indicate an inferior bulb.

Bloom Season

When people hear the word bulb, they immediately think about spring-blooming bulbs, like narcissus and tulips. However, a wide variety of bulbs produces a display in the garden from early spring until late fall. Bulbs generally bloom in a predictable sequence. For example, crocuses bloom earlier than narcissus. The sequence may remain the same from season to season, but the exact date of bloom is affected by weather conditions in a particular location. A cool spring can delay bloom for two or more weeks; likewise, an unusually warm spring can induce early

flowering. In some cases, the actual flowering period varies from cultivar to cultivar. Weather conditions affect the length of bloom display. Spring-blooming bulbs typically last longer if the weather remains cool. Hot spring temperatures dramatically decrease the length of display. This often happens in Kentucky and generally shortens the expected display from tulips.

Planting

Soils-Most bulbs tolerate a wide range of soil conditions. They generally do best in soils with a pH range of 5.5 to 6.5, although some, such as hyacinths, do better in a slightly more acidic soil. In general, soil type is not as important as soil drainage. Avoid planting in soils with poor drainage because bulbs will not reach maximum growth potential and often will rot.



Location-Most bulbs prefer a full-sun location. Spring-blooming bulbs can be planted under the canopy of deciduous trees. These bulbs generally bloom and complete most of their growth cycle before trees fully leaf out.

Planting depth-Bulbs and corms are generally planted at a

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Master Gardener Class coming in February! See Page 4 for details.

Fall Gardening Cleanup Controls Spring Diseases

You can reduce the risk of some common problems next year by getting rid of leftover plant debris in vegetable, flower and fruit gardening areas this fall.

Several disease-causing fungi and bacteria spend the winter on plant debris, and can cause diseases the following growing season. Proper garden sanitation can combat such diseases as early blight, mildews, gray mold fungus and various root rot and wilt problems.

To combat diseases, remove all plants, except winter vegetables or cover crops, from the garden. It is especially important to completely clean out and destroy all diseased plants in vegetable gardens and fruit plantings. Carefully dig up and remove decomposing roots to keep them from releasing disease-causing microbes into the soil. Also, remove spent blooms and foliage from flower gardens and mummied fruits on or around trees and grapevines.

Garden debris is a wonderful addition to a compost pile. A good pile will heat up and completely decompose the remains in a few years. This process will destroy most disease-causing organisms.

If heat development is not possible in your composting process, dispose of plants infected with root knot nematode or Fusarium and Verticillium wilt diseases. Be sure to put these infected plants

where they cannot be recycled into the garden.

Gardeners who decide not to remove old plants should till gardening areas to break dead materials into smaller pieces and then work them into the soil. Plant debris decomposes more rapidly when buried than when left on the soil surface. This reduces populations of disease-causing organisms that could cause problems next year.

Planting a cover crop to maintain and rejuvenate the soil is another way to get your vegetable garden off to a good start next year.

A cover crop will help prevent erosion of enriched topsoil, keep rains from leaching minerals from the soil, prevent compaction and stop growth of weeds that can serve as overwintering sites for insects and diseases. A cover crop also will add organic matter, both from its roots and when tilled into the garden soil.

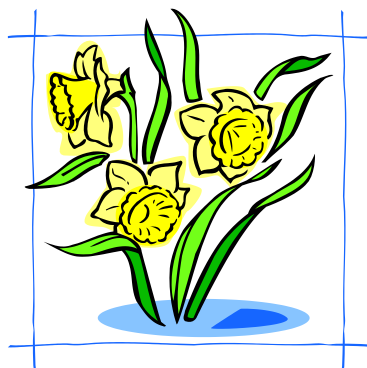
Successfully growing a cover crop requires proper crop selection, correct timing and good management techniques. You will reap the benefits of cover crops in future vegetable harvests.



Plant Your Tulips Here (con't)

depth equal to two to three times the diameter of the bulb. Soil type also affects planting depths. Bulbs should be planted deeper in sandy soils than in clay soils.

Planting time-Bulbs generally grow in a cycle. At planting time they begin to produce a root system. Spring-blooming bulbs should be planted early enough in the fall to allow time for this root system to be produced before cold soil temperatures reduce plant growth. Some hardy summer flowering bulbs, such as lilies, can be planted in fall or spring. Generally, bulbs are only available for sale at their proper planting time. For example, tulip bulbs are not available in spring, and dahlias aren't offered in fall catalogs.



Planting techniques-Bulbs can be planted individually or in groups. The correct spacing depends on the specific bulb. To produce a uniform display, plant all the bulbs of a specific cultivar at the same depth.

General Maintenance

Watering-You should water all bulbs thoroughly at planting time. This helps establish good contact between soil and bulb and helps initiate root growth as soon as possible.

Generally, rainfall supplies enough moisture during the growing season, but all bulbs should be watered during periods of drought.

Dead heading-Remove declining blooms to prevent seed set. Seed set reduces the production of storage materials that are necessary for good bulb growth, which in turn affects blooming the next season.

Fertilization-Most bulbs do not require a fertilizer application at planting. Although it is not

Fall Chores: Dividing Perennials

Are the perennials in your landscape in decline? Are they blooming less than they used to even though you fertilize and water them regularly? Is the foliage stunted and do the plants lack vigor? It may be that your plants have become too crowded and are in need of dividing. Most perennials need to be divided every 3-5 years, some even more often. Keeping plants growing vigorously by dividing them is one way to prevent problems with insects and disease. Vigorously growing plants are often able to tolerate or resist attack by pests. Digging and dividing perennials regularly would be a cultural practice in line with Integrated Pest Management, or IPM-an approach that allows homeowners to have a nice looking landscape using a minimum of pesticides.

Fall and spring are the times for dividing most perennials. As a general rule, perennials that bloom in the spring, such as daylilies, peonies, and bearded iris, should be divided in the fall. Perennials that bloom in the summer and fall, such as chrysanthemums, hostas, and asters, should be divided in the spring. The technique is pretty much the same regardless of the time of year. Dividing is best done as plants end their growth and begin dormancy in the fall or before regrowth occurs in the spring.

When digging perennials, loosen the soil around the plant with a shovel or garden fork to allow the plant to be lifted with a good portion of its roots system. Shake or work the root ball with your

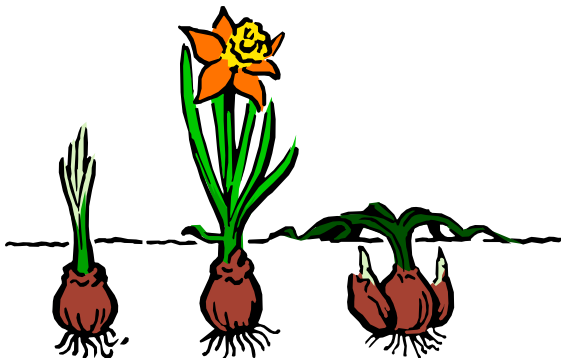
fingers to dislodge as much soil as possible. This will allow you to see the growing parts of the plant, newer growth is usually toward the outside of the clump. Next, pull or cut the clump apart leaving a mixture of old and new growth with each division. Trim back the foliage to 2-3 inches and remove any broken or excessively long roots. Plant the division at the same depth as it was previously growing. You will likely have extra plants so share or exchange some with neighbors or friends.

After planting, apply a layer of organic mulch and keep the plants well watered for several weeks until roots have become established. Fertilize the transplants only sparingly until growth resumes. Some plants will respond with increased bloom the following season, others may take a season or two to return to their full potential.



Plant Your Tulips Here (con't)

necessary, applying bone meal may be beneficial in some soils. Contrary to what some bulb books tell you, most bulbs should be fertilized with a complete fertilizer such as 10-10-10 at a rate of 1 to 2 pounds per 100 square feet when foliage is emerging in spring. Later application of fertilizer, however, can promote certain disease problems.



Container-grown plants require more frequent fertilization during their active growing seasons because nutrients that are leached from containers need to be replaced. You can use any water-soluble, complete fertilizer for container plants. Follow label directions for correct dilution rate.

Care of foliage-Foliage should be allowed to die back naturally. After plants have bloomed, foliage acts as a factory to produce all sugars necessary for bulb vigor. If you remove the foliage prematurely, you risk destroying bulb vigor. Remove as little foliage as possible when cutting flowers for indoor use.

Master Gardener Class to Commence this Spring

The dates are set. The time is right. All we need is people! The 2012 Class of the Kentucky Master Gardener Program is ready to start on February 21 at 9 a.m. at the Hardin County Extension Office.

Classes will continue on:

- ☼ February 23, 28,
- ☼ March 1, 3*, 6, 8, 12, 15, 20, 22, 24*, 27,
- ☼ April 3.

Class times are 9 a.m. to 12 noon on week days and 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Saturdays. The Saturday classes are marked with a *.

The Master Gardener Program is designed to expand horticultural knowledge among the community through the use of trained volunteers.

Your decision to enroll in the program should be based on a commitment to help others in gardening. You are asked to participate in a 40-hour internship to Cooperative Extension Service programs in return for the training.

What are you going to do and learn? A little bit of a lot of different subjects. We'll start off with a little



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history of the Extension Service and how Master Gardeners fit in to this almost 100 year institution. Then, we will delve into the "hard core" science classes: Botany, Soils, Plant Diseases, and Insects.

Do NOT let this list scare you. These classes are the basis for all the "fun" classes like Woody Plants, Flowers, Fruits, Vegetable Gardening, Turf Care and Propagation.

You will receive a huge Master Gardener Handbook and lots of other resource information. So much so that we ask that you purchase another 3" binder to put it all in!

There is a supply fee of \$100 to cover cost of resource material. I try to keep the cost low so more people can participate.

I am looking forward to working with a whole new group of Master Gardener Trainees. If you are interested, please contact the office.

Deadline to register for the class is: February 1st.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

The 14th Annual

**MASTER GARDENER PLANT FAIR
MAY 19, 2012**

Falling into ?

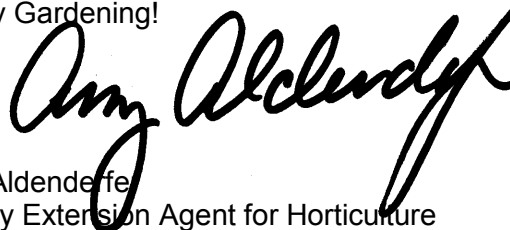
I'm falling...falling into a mound of paper and planning for the next year. We have a great lineup of classes and events planned all the way to the beginning of May. I wanted to let you all know what was coming up and getting them on your calendar. I feel locked in and ready to start gathering materials for this round of Gardener's Toolbox Classes.

We're also starting the next Master Gardener Class in late February. This is a limited size class, so everyone gets individualized attention. Sign up as soon as you can, because the registration deadline is February 1.

It's also cleanup time around here so I'm

trying to clean out the office. I'm finding bits and pieces of old programs: extra seeds, trowels from a beginning gardening program, rulers from a landscape design workshop... Maybe these will pop up in an upcoming class as giveaways?

Happy Gardening!



Amy Aldenderfer
County Extension Agent for Horticulture



Gardener's Toolbox Series

Fall and Winter

How to Grow: Garlic - October 19th

Do you need to keep the vampires away? Trying to live a healthier lifestyle? Growing your own garlic is easy and fun. Come and learn for an hour to grow your own. Now is the time to plant!

Make and Take: Terrariums - November 16th

Little gardens are back! Make your own mini-garden to cultivate a little green through the harsh bleak winter.

Holiday Wreath-Making with Natural Materials - December 6th

Make a evergreen wreath for the holiday. Bring with you: pruning shears, gardening gloves, decorative ribbons, and other accessories that you would like to incorporate into your wreath. All other supplies are included in the class fee. Class size is limited to 35.

Build a Bluebird House - January 18th

The Eastern Bluebird male scouts a nesting site in early February. Come and make a cozy home for the bird that eats destructive insects in the garden.

Vegetable Gardening 101 - January 31st

Start with the beginning. This class will get you started on your first vegetable garden. We will discuss gardening in containers, square foot gardening, and how to plan a garden for yourself and your family.

The "How to Grow" classes are 1 hour long discussions on growing conditions, nutrients, and varieties on a particular group of food plants.

How to Grow: Potatoes - February 20th

Have you eaten a fresh potato? You are missing out if you don't grow your own. Potatoes are easy and there are more varieties than russet and Yukon gold. We'll explore varieties, growing challenges, and cooking tips.

How to Grow: Carrots - March 5

Did you know that everyone can grow carrots? There are long ones, short ones and even carrots that aren't orange! Learn all about the lowly carrot and the exciting new varieties, how to grow them in Kentucky clay and the best recipe ever!

How to Grow: Lettuce - March 21st

Have you eaten your greens today? Love a fresh salad with all the unusual green and purple, spicy and peppery flavors? Explore all the varieties, colors and textures of modern and heirloom lettuces.

How to Grow: Tomatoes - April 17th

Wow! How do you pick your next favorite tomato variety? Let's talk about favorites and new favorites. Learn how to have the first tomato on the block. Get a few plants to try and test.

How to Grow: Green Beans - April 23rd

Do you have bad memories of snapping huge mounds of string beans? Now there are lots of beans that don't need to be de-stringed. Have you heard of the Greasy Bean? Wanna try growing some? Explore the range of flavors, taste and colors of the humble green bean.

How to Grow: Summer Squash - May 7th

Straight-neck, Crook-neck, Zucchini, or Pattypan which one do you choose? Find out which ones are the easiest to grow, when to harvest for the best flavor, and several recipes to use the bountiful harvest.

Registration and payment must be received one week prior to class.

**All Classes are held at the Hardin County Extension Office beginning at 6:00 p.m.
All Classes are \$5 each, unless otherwise noted.**

Return Service Requested

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