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## START YOUR SPRING GARDEN IN AUTUMN

### BUY SPRING BULBS

#### WHEN TO PLANT

- Spring bulbs do best when planted in fall or early winter...a few weeks before the cold sets in. They can handle low temps, so don't worry if you've already had your first frost. As long as the soil is still workable (not frozen solid), you can pop them in the ground.

#### WHERE TO PLANT

- While daffodils and tulips generally prefer full sun, they (especially daffodils) can handle a little shade. Pick a spot where the soil drains well. If the soil holds too much water, the bulbs can rot. If your soil has a lot of clay, work in some extra organic material like compost.

#### HOW TO PLANT

- Till several inches of compost into your bed. No need to fertilize as they've already stored up everything they need to bloom their first year. If you don't intend to dig them back up, bulbs can be planted 3ish" apart. If you only want them in the same spot for one season, you can plant them 1" apart (think egg carton spacing). As a rule of thumb, bulbs like to be planted 2.5 times their height so the bigger the bulb, the deeper you plant. Most tulip and daff bulbs like to hang out about 5 - 6" below the surface.

#### ANNE'S TIPS

- Squirrels love to dig up freshly planted bulbs. The real kicker here is they don't actually want your bulbs at all! They're actually just out to pilfer what other squirrels' have hidden away. They assume any spot of newly dug-in dirt must hold treasures for them. If squirrels might be a problem just scatter some leaves, twigs or other garden debris (frost cloth or an old bed sheet work too) over your newly planted bulbs for a few weeks or so.
- Another way to keep squirrels away is to scatter chicken manure on top of your bed. Squirrels don't like it (but your bulbs won't mind it!).
- For tulips and daffodils to abundantly re-bloom the following year, they need a chance to store up energy. Make sure you fertilize them before they begin to shoot up and after they've finished blooming. Also, if you're using them as cuts, take care you don't cut the stem too far down. They store up energy by photosynthesizing and need at least two full sets of leaves left intact. Wait until these remaining leaves have yellowed before removing them.
- Speaking of repeat blooming, tulips are not all created equal in this regard. In general, I find the "fancier" the bulb (ahem, those that have been specifically bred to be amazing cut flowers... think parrots and peonies) the less likely they are to continue to re-bloom. If you're wanting repeat bloomers, look for descriptions that include "perennializing, naturalizing or species". Triumph, Darwin (Impression tulips fall in this group) and Viridiflora are all perennializing. Species (or Botanical) tulips & Greigii are as well but are shorter so, as cut flowers, these only work in tiny arrangements.



## HOW TO FORCE BULBS INDOORS

Many types of spring bulbs can be forced inside. Tulips, daffodils, hyacinth, summer snowflake, anemones, even dwarf irises. The trick is they need to have been “pre-chilled” which means they’ve already gone through their “winter” cooling period. Here's a link to our current inventory:

[BUY SPRING BULBS](#)

### SUPPLIES NEEDED

- Shallow container
- Pre-chilled bulbs
- Medium of choice - gravel, rocks and/or potting soil
- (Optional) Dehydrated moss for top dressing

### INSTRUCTIONS

- Keep your bulbs in the fridge (away from fruit) until you are ready to plant.
- Plant bulbs about 1” apart, pointy side up, leaving about ½" of the bulb exposed (roots should remain wet, but bulbs will rot if completely saturated). Be sure to nestle bulbs in tightly as they become a bit top heavy in full bloom.
- Once planted, water the medium until it is moist, but not soggy. If using rocks, then only the very bottom of the bulbs should be exposed to the water.
- Set bulbs in a cool (50 ish degrees), dark location until roots begin to form. Once you see roots, set the bulbs out in a sunny and warm (65 ish degrees) location. When you see 1” or so of the stem peeking out, it will be about 2 - 3 weeks until the flowers bloom.

### ANNE'S TIPS

- To prolong bloom time, once flowers appear, keep them out of direct sunlight and away from spots that are above 70 degrees. Keep the growing medium moist but not soggy.
- To have a succession of flowers blooming indoors, I either stagger my planting a bit, or pot all of my bulbs up at the same time but keep some in a cold (40-50 degree) location and take them out as I want them to start waking up.
- You’d be surprised how many containers you have around the house that work well for this...Grammy’s old gravy boat... that chipped terracotta pot on the shelves of the garage... Some of my favorite vessels to use are thrifted vintage finds. I’ve also had great luck at our local dollar store sourcing glass bowls, rocks and even dehydrated moss.



## HOW TO GROW PEONIES

These May show-stoppers are some of the easiest flowers to grow. Once established, you can pretty much ignore them. Here's how to get these beauties off to a great start and blooming for years (even decades) to come. Here's a link to our current inventory:

[BUY ROOTS](#)

### WHEN TO PLANT

- Peonies grow best when they are planted in the fall before the ground freezes. They can also be planted in the spring but they establish slower and I find it a bit harder to keep them hydrated.

### WHERE TO PLANT

- Plant your roots in full sun, where they will receive 6 - 8 hours of light each day. While some varieties can handle a bit less, I give these blooms plenty of light which maximizes the number of blooms they can produce. Take care when choosing your spot as peonies like well-draining soil and do not like to be transplanted; they often quit blooming for a season or two after changing location.

### HOW TO PLANT

- Place your roots 3 - 4 feet apart. This is important for root development and air circulation between plants. Dig a hole a few inches deeper and several inches wider than your root on all sides. Place your root in the hole with its eyes facing up and positioned so that the top of the root will be no more than 2" below the soil. Add a bit of compost and bone meal to the dirt and cover your root completely. Carefully tamp the soil to eliminate air pockets, being careful not to push the root too far below the surface. Blooms planted too deep will send up foliage with little to no flowers.

### FALL CARE

- While established peonies can handle a cold snap, newly planted roots can be susceptible to frost heaving (when ice expands in the soil and pushes the root up to the surface, exposing it to frost damage). To protect your plant, place an extra 6" or so of compost on top of the planted root. You can even add a layer of leaves or other garden debris on top for extra protection. Just make sure to remove that extra layer before your plant starts sending up its shoots as it prohibits flowering.

### WATERING

- When you first tuck your root in, give it a good drink. The soil should be moist but not soupy. Here in the PNW there is usually no need for further watering in the fall, but if you live somewhere with dry Autumn weather, keep an eye on the soil to make sure your root doesn't completely dry out. There is no need to water once the cold weather sets in as your root will go dormant.

### STAKING & SUPPORT

- These blooms can hold a lot of water, which can cause the flowers to flop over and lie on the ground, damaging its petals. When the stems are about knee-high, I like to pop a tomato cage on them, or put a bamboo stake on either side and wrap a little twine around them. This provides some support when the blooms get water logged.

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## HOW TO GROW PEONIES (CONTINUED)

### ANNE'S TIPS

- Don't back off that late season growth. Your peonies might look a wee bit sad after the heat rolls in and other flowers take over. Resist the urge to cut those stems! Not only is it helpful for the plant to continue to photosynthesize to help the roots continue to grow, peony stems have fantastic fall color and provide some of my favorite foliage for late-season arrangements. Once the first frost hits, I cut my stems off 2" from the ground and throw the stems away. Peonies can carry over disease from year to year so I choose to put them in the trash instead of compost them.
- Don't mind the ants. They are just enjoying the nectar and they actually help to protect your plants from other problem-causing insects.
- If you live somewhere with hot summers, choose peonies that bloom early. This will ensure that you get some flowers before the plants retreat amidst the heat. We have a long peony season in the Pacific Northwest (aka PNW) so I like to plant very early, early, mid, late and very late flowering varieties which stretches my season to 5-6 weeks long.
- Peonies need time to develop and often take a season (or two) to get established. Don't panic if you don't see blooms your first year. If your plant has healthy green leaves, you're good to go. You can give them a little fertilizer or compost the year after initial planting but be careful not to over do it. Peonies only need fertilizer every 2 - 3 years.



## HOW TO GROW DAHLIAS

BUY SPRING BULBS

### STORAGE

- Tubers need to be stored in a cool (40 - 50 degree) and high humidity location until you are ready to plant.

### IDEAL TEMPERATURES (WHEN TO PLANT)

- When your soil temps warm up to 60 degrees or so and all chance of frost has passed.

### WHERE TO PLANT

- Dahlias need at least six hours of full sun each day, so pick a spot that is full of sunshine. They do great in raised beds, in pots on your deck (make sure they're at least 14" wide and deep...the bigger the better) or planted directly in the ground.

### HOW TO PLANT & SPACING

- Mix 4" or so of compost and a balanced fertilizer into your soil before planting. Plant tubers 3"-4" deep in well-drained soil with the eye face up (if possible). If you're like me and sometimes plant late, the tubers can already have shoots coming out that are a bit squirrely. Don't stress over exactly how the sprout is positioned...it'll eventually find its way to the surface.

### STAKING

- Dahlias tend to be top-heavy and are susceptible to wind damage. You can support plants individually by sinking a t-post a few inches away from the tuber at time of planting and then loosely tying the main stalks of the dahlia plant to the post as it matures. If you have more than a couple plants, I like sinking t-posts every 5 feet or so and running twine around the outside of the posts to corral them.

### WATERING

- Unless the soil is completely dry, there is no need to water at all until you see about 4" - 6" of growth above the ground. Once the plants are tall enough, keep the tubers moist but not soaked. I like to stick my finger in the dirt – even if the top layer is bone dry, if I find moisture an inch or so down, I know my plants are doing just fine.

### PINCHING

- When the plants reach about 12" in height, pinch off the top growing center, taking away 1-2 sets of leaves. This encourages more growth from the base, resulting in longer stems and 3-4 times more flowers!

### ANNE'S TIPS

- Slugs and snails love tender dahlia shoots! I recommend applying Sluggo Plus a few weeks before planting, at planting and every 2 weeks after until the new shoots are about 12" tall.
- If you have a sprout that pops off the tuber don't worry. Your tuber will grow some new ones in its place. You can try potting up the little shoot (or planting it directly in the ground). If it takes it can make a new plant, tuber and all!



## SHOW TO GROWN ANEMONES & RANUNCULUS

### BUY SPRING BULBS

### WHEN TO PLANT

- Anemones can handle about 25 degrees and ranunculus about 30 degrees, which usually means that, for zones 7 and above, corms can be planted outside in late fall/early winter. In zones 6 and below, plant corms in late winter/early spring.

### IDEAL TEMPERATURES AND PROTECTION

- Ranunculus are a bit more tender than anemones so if temps dip below 30 degrees for an extended period of time they should be covered with some form of protection (I've used everything from a low tunnel to frost cloth to a bedsheet;). If frost cloth ends up lying directly on top of the foliage it can damage the plant so be sure to leave a bit of space between the covering and the plant, especially if it's still undercover as it's beginning to shoot up blooms.

### SOAKING

- Soak corms for 4 hours or so. During this time they will plump up and increase in size. You can go ahead and plant them at this point or follow steps for pre-sprouting.

### HOW TO PLANT & SPACING

- Prepare the planting area by tiling in 3 - 4" of compost and a balanced fertilizer.

### SPACING

- These guys don't like being planted deep...I plant my ranunculus at 2" and anemones at 3". If you're keeping them in year round (not removing them in the fall) then plant 6"-12" apart so they have room to grow. If you're taking them out then they can be spaced as close as 4" apart.

### ANNE'S TIPS

- Expect your first bloom from pre-sprouted anemones around 90-120 days after being planted outside and around 120-150 days for pre-sprouted ranunculus. If your growing zone allows, you can extend your season by succession planting your corms (I space out my plantings a few weeks to a month apart). In doing so, I've been able to lengthen my growing season between 4-6 weeks.
- Anemones go dormant when temps consistently hit 70 degrees or so and ranunculus will stop producing around 80 degrees. Keeping this in mind helps you know the latest time you can plant them and still get a good growing season in. These guys are heavy feeders so, if you're wanting to keep your corms for the following year, make sure you fertilize during and after their growing season. They should also be left in the ground until the leaves are fairly yellowed. Though it's not pretty, it allows your plants to photosynthesize and soak up nutrients they need to re-bloom the following year.

#### A NOTE ABOUT PRE-SPROUTING

*Not a must, but pre-sprouting gives the plants a head-start heading into their growing season. They will be bigger and stronger and bloom sooner with longer blooming windows than corms that haven't been pre-sprouted.*

#### PRE-SPROUTING INSTRUCTIONS

1. Increase the size of your corm by soaking it for approximately four hours before planting.
2. To pre-sprout the corms, fill a tray with about 1" of damp soil (not sopping wet...think partially wrung out sponge). Pop the corms in, pokey side down, then cover with additional damp soil. Make sure they're covered about 1".
3. Place the tray in a cool and dark spot where it will be undisturbed for 2-3 weeks or so. Check on them every few days to make sure the soil is moist and remove any corms if they have mold.
4. Corms are ready to plant outside once they're roots are around 1/2" long.