

Temperatures are still warm, but by thinking ahead and doing a little planting now, you will enjoy a color boost in the cooler winter or spring months ahead. A wide variety of bulbous plants will produce lovely flowers year after year in North Florida.

What we often refer to as “bulbous plants” may actually include those plants that grow from corms, tubers, tuberous roots and rhizomes, as well as from true bulbs. These bulbous plants are able to thrive despite unfavorable conditions because of the thickened underground plant parts that store their food.

Most bulbs thrive in a sunny location with well-drained soil. Although heavy shade should be avoided, a few bulbs, such as caladiums and amaryllis, prefer some shade. Raised beds filled with soil can be used if your preferred site does not drain properly. Or simply dig a ditch to carry excess water away from the bed to lower ground.

When preparing the planting bed, incorporate 3 to 4 inches of organic matter such as peat, compost or aged manure. Proper planting depths for each bulb should be included with the bulb package, or you can find them at the UF/IFAS website <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/mg029> Planting too deep is one of the most common mistakes that lead to plant death or lack of blooms.

Covering the planting bed with a couple inches of mulch will help retard weed growth and conserve moisture. Water is especially important while the plant is growing and flowering so the soil should not be allowed to dry out. Remove faded flowers but allow healthy green leaves to remain after the bloom period. The plant will continue to produce food to be stored in the underground storage organs. This stored food will enable the plant bloom next year!

Some great ‘bulbs’ to plant now in North Florida include callas, amaryllis, cannas, crinum, Louisiana iris, and lilies. Some lilies commonly grown in North Florida are the Easter lily, Madonna lily, regal and speciosum lily. General care information, propagation methods and an expanded plant list of suitable species for our area can be found at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/mg029> Gardening information can always be obtained from your county Extension office. 752-5384.  
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