

# FALL AUCTION

Sun. Afternoon  
 Sept. 14, 1:30 p.m.  
 Preview From 9 a.m.  
 Auctioneer—Steve Meyers

AUCTION ITEMS INCLUDE:  
 Trees & Shrubs, Houseplants, Bird Baths,  
 Gardening Items, Fountains, etc.  
 (Cash & Carry—Please Bring Chairs)

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# Gardening

## Bulb planting time draws near

By Pat Leuchtman  
*leisure Columnist*

**C**heerfulness, Lemon Beauty, Orange Wonder, Twink, Spring Glory. These evocative names all belong to varieties of daffodils and narcissi. This is the time to remember that gardening is somewhat like the fashion business; if we want to have bright drifts of spring bulbs to help lift us out of the winter doldrums next year, we have to be thinking and working now.

Daffodils and narcissi should be planted in late September or early October, early enough so there can be good root development before the frosts stop growth for the season.

The bulbs can be used in many ways, planted in borders, or beds or scattered in naturalized drafts in a country landscape. Just remember not to plant them in rows. Books will tell you that one way to achieve a casual planting is to prepare the bed or border or whatever and then toss handfuls of bulbs. Supposedly they will fall in a random pattern and you can plant them where they lay.

Elsa Bakalar, friend and expert gardener, says it is lovely advice and she often tries it. The problem is that her tossed bulbs somehow always end up falling into neat rows or little circles. This is not the effect she is after at all. She says it always takes a good deal of artifice on her part to achieve the illusion of naturalness. A gardener is no less an artist than a painter or poet and this is a problem that every artist will recognize and understand.



As with all perennials, preparation of the soil is very important. The first step is to dig deep. Most books recommend planting daffodil and narcissus bulbs 6 inches or more deep. Elsa recommends planting them 12 inches deep because this will slow down the reproductive process and you won't have to dig the bulbs up to divide them quite so often. It also makes for good strong plants. Deep planting may mean that you will have to wait a little longer in the spring for bloom, but the healthy plants are worth it.

Dig the soil deeper than the bulbs will be planted. For instance, if you are going to plant your King Alfred' daffodils 12 inches deep, spade the soil to a depth of 16-18 inches. Into the loose soil at the bottom of the hole, incorporate some bonemeal, a little peat moss and lots of compost. Be especially sure that any manure is well rotted and composted because these bulbs are very intolerant of fresh manure. Also mix compost and bonemeal into the soil you will use to cover the bulbs. You want to achieve a rich, well-drained loam that will promote strong growth and prevent rot.

If your soil is very dry and sandy or if you plant in small, shallow beds, you may want to mulch after the ground has frozen, but otherwise it isn't necessary.

Once new growth shows in the spring, Elsa gives her bulbs a sprinkling of a general garden fertilizer, raking it gently into the soil. She also gives them a top dressing of compost.

After the blooms are faded and finished, do not think it is time to cut back the foliage along with the dead stems. It is through the leaves that the plants gather food that is stored in the bulb enabling it to make strong bloom the next spring. Elsa gives the plants another feeding after flowering and waits until the foliage has died back before cutting it down or mowing the area.

A booklet on the care and culture of many spring bulbs from allium to tulips is available from the Extension Office.

I was visiting Tina Smith there last week and she answered a question sent me by Alice Dabrody of Heath. Alice's garden suffered a lot of grasshopper damage this year. She didn't know why or what to do about it. Tina deduced correctly that the garden is next to a field and that a strip around the garden had not been kept mowed. Fall tilling of the soil so that grasshopper egg cases can be exposed to the elements and Alice's chickens, and keeping a strip around the garden mowed next year, should go a long way toward curing the problem. □

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