

HOME & GARDEN

Insure the vision of next season's garden

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The days are getting shorter, and we are starting to see some dreary days, so it is not very hard to remember how happy we were last spring when the first and most welcome spring bulbs came into bloom. Now, on these chilly autumn days, it is time again to plant the spring flowering bulbs.

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The snowdrop (*galanthus nivalis*) blooms so early in the spring that often there is still snow on the ground when it shakes its head and nods in the thin watery sun. These tiny plants rarely grow taller than 3 or 4 inches and are so hardy that they prefer a cool, moist soil and some shade, even in the earliest spring when they flower. They will multiply freely so if you plant just a few beneath trees in the lawn, in front of evergreen plantings or in a dooryard where they can be easily admired, they will soon develop into generous clumps.

The crocus is certainly the next flower one expects to see blooming in the early spring, but, unlike the snowdrop, it does not like so much cold. While it is perfectly hardy, it pre-

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fers a lighter, well-drained soil and a lot of sun, although it will tolerate some light shade. Crocuses also increase rapidly, but one of the biggest problems you may have is protecting your initial planting from marauding rodents.

One way to protect them is to dig up the bed where you wish to plant them, arrange your bulbs about 4 inches apart and then lay one-half inch of wire mesh over the bulbs, pressing the edges several inches into the soil on all sides. Then finish covering with 4 inches of sandy soil and water well.

I have also heard it is possible to plant moth balls along with your crocus to repel the rodents.

Crocuses should be planted where they will catch the sun and perhaps be protected by rocks or a wall. Also think of places where they can bloom and then be left undisturbed without looking too unattractive until the foliage dies down. If you have a sheltered spot where you have a ground cover like pachysandra growing, plant the crocus bulbs among the ground cover, and you'll have a very attractive display early in the year.

Most people plant the Dutch crocus, and, lovely as it is, you might want to try planting some of the other varieties as well. Purple crocus sieberi blooms even earlier than the Dutch crocus, and *c. susianus* in yellow will spread very quickly.

If you have a rock garden, you might want to think about planting anemones. *Anemone blanda* is a tiny flower, only 3 inches high, that grows among spreading fernlike foliage. It comes in a rich, violet blue as well as pink. These "bulbs" are actually tubers and should be soaked for an hour or so before planting 3 inches deep and about 2 inches apart. Since the flowers are so tiny it is good to remember that they should be planted in small clumps of at least six.



There is a dwarf daffodil, *narcissus minimus*, that is extremely hardy, and it is another gem for planting in a rock garden. It only reaches a height of 4 inches, and the flower is probably only an inch long. Though it is so fragile-looking, it

is just as easy to grow as standard daffodils and narcissus. Its tiny golden trumpet is a brave and cheerful herald of the coming of spring.

Spring is not complete without daffodils and narcissus, both of whom bear the family name narcissus. There is no lack of variety among this large family. They all have a center corona or trumpet, encircled by the petals or perianth, but the combination of colors and hues is amazing.

King Alfred is a regal, brilliant yellow, old standby. Golden Rapture is another golden beauty. Spring Glory is two shades of yellow, and Pink Glory is indeed quite pink. Mount Hood is a large and majestic white trumpet narcissus.

Daffodils and narcissus must be planted early enough in the fall so that a strong root system will have developed by the time the ground freezes. If you are going to divide your own clumps or get bulbs from a friend, they should be dug up after the foliage has already died down, but before active root growth begins again. If the bulbs are planted later in the season than is ideal, keep the ground well and heavily mulched so that it remains unfrozen for as long a time as possible.

Narcissus are not terribly demanding of the soil, but since they won't need to be divided for several years it is wise to take some care when planting. Work in very well-rotted manure or put in a layer of compost or vermiculite in a handful of bonemeal when planting the bulbs. Plant them at least 6 inches deep. If you plant them as deep as 12 inches, you will encourage very sturdy growth, and they will not have to be divided so often.

Gardeners are fortunate because there is always something to look forward to just a little time ahead, and beyond that, there is almost always something to do now to insure that vision of next season's garden. Choose some bulbs now. They are easy to grow; your hardest task will be choosing among the many, many varieties.

HEATING TIPS

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