



GREEN TIPS

Department of Horticulture - Michigan State University

STORING AND PROPAGATING BULBS

Storage

If you cannot plant bulbs immediately after purchase, hold them in a dry area with good air circulation at temperatures between 60° and 65° F. A basement shelf is a good location. Avoid storing bulbs in a garage or any area near exhaust fumes. Plant hardy bulbs even in late fall, if necessary. Hardy bulbs held over winter and planted in spring will not flower. They need the cold temperatures of winter to induce proper growth. leftover bulbs can be forced indoors however.

Check stored bulbs monthly for moisture buildup or deterioration. Discard any diseased bulbs or storage material immediately, before others are contaminated. A midwinter fungicide dusting of tender bulbs may be necessary.

Never store bulbs in a refrigerator with apples. Apples produce a large amount of ethylene, a natural ripening hormone that is deadly to bulbs. The tiny preformed flower bud within a tulip bulb will abort if exposed to even a very small quantity of ethylene. For the same reason, bulbs should never be dropped or bruised - damaged tissue produces ethylene.

Propagation

Some bulbs, such as daffodils, snowdrops and grape hyacinths, multiply readily. Others, including tulips and hyacinths, merely replace the old bulb with a new bulb each year. Bulbs are best divided and transplanted when dormant, in late June or July.

When dividing tubers, cut them into pieces with a clean, sharp knife, being sure that each section contains at least one bud or eye. Dip exposed sides in a commercial dust or dilute fungicide as protective measure.

Source: MSU Extension Bulletin No. 399

Gladiolus corms are fairly easy to propagate by breaking off the small corms (cormels) that are grouped around the base of the main corm. Cormels require about two years to reach blooming size; store in slightly moist medium (40° F) over winter and soak in water for two days to soften them before planting. Cover with only 1 to 1 1/2 inches of soil. Follow the same procedure for lily bulblets (aerial bulblets) and bulbils (miniature bulbs) except do not store them over winter or soak before planting.

Professional propagators or advanced hobyists may try propagating true bulbs and corms by “scooping,” “scoring,” or other special techniques. Further information on these methods is available in standard propagation textbooks.

MSU is an Affirmative-Action Equal-Opportunity Institution. MSU Extension programs are open to all without regard to race, color, national origin, sex, disability, age, or religion.

Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work in agriculture and home economics, acts of May 8, and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U.D.S. Department of Agriculture, Arlen Leholm, Director, Michigan State University Extension, E. Lansing, MI. 48824.

This information is for educational purposes only. Reference to commercial products or trade names does not imply endorsement by the MSU Extension or bias against those not mentioned. Hthis bulletin becomes public property upon publication and may be reprinted verbatim as a separate or within another publication with credit to MSU. Reprinting cannot be used to endorse or advertise a commercial product or company.

GT1141 - March, 1998

Source: MSU Extension Bulletin No. 399