



Oops. Did you forget to plant those bulbs last fall or maybe you meant to put in some perennials before the ground froze solid? Well, there are plenty of bulbs and perennials that you can plant this spring to give your garden a boost. Non-hardy bulbs offer a somewhat tropical look to our non-tropical area. And taking the time to plant favorite perennials or choosing new and unusual ones should become a fun spring ritual.

Bulbs, Corms, Tubers...

*Agapanthus* (African Lily) is originally from South Africa. If you shallowly plant this rhizome in full sun to a bit of shade, you will be rewarded with wide somewhat evergreen leaves. And then in July or August beautiful blooms (anywhere from white to blue) will emerge up to a height of 40". These are not hardy for our area so if you plant them directly in the ground, take them up for winter storage before hard freeze. *Agapanthus* can also be grown in pots and does well as houseplants over winter.

*Cannas* are heavy feeding, late flowering rhizomes that frequently seen in this area but are not winter hardy. When planted in warm, loose well-drained soil they thrive throughout the summer to reward the gardener with beautifully colored blooms on 3'– 8' stems with green, reddish or variegated upright leaves.

*Crinum* (Swamp Lily) is also from South Africa. These non-hardy bulb lilies like sunny conditions, especially morning sun, and will bloom in August or September. The white to dark pink blooms stand at a height of 2' to 4'. They can be planted directly into the soil or used as container plants.

*Dahlias* are tuberous beauties that should not be planted outside until the soil has warmed. After planting, they need to be gradually covered with soil as the shoots grow. Even though heights can vary from 8" to 8', all except the very short will need staking for stem support. Flowers emerge mid to late summer and colors run almost the entire rainbow. They make great cut flowers but will not survive our winters, so be sure to remove the tubers from the soil in late fall.

*Alocasia* and *Colocasia* (Elephant Ears) are tropical bulbs that really make a statement in the garden. They can grow anywhere from 2' to 8' in height. The impressively large foliage ranges in color from green to purplish red, solid color to variegate. The foliage is the main attraction of this plant as our season is not long enough to see flower production. These bulbs will do better if potted indoors in

late April as the roots will need time to develop before any foliage appears. Do not set these out until we are past all danger of frost. They require a lot of water but when well taken care of in loose, well-drained soil - they will perform well for you all season.

*Fritillaria* (Fritillary) are bulbs that need to be planted in well-drained soil in full sun. When happy they will rise to about 3' in height. Most of the species has beautiful checkerboard patterns on the flowers and range in color from yellow to orange to purple. They are marginally hardy for this area so you may need to bring the bulbs in over winter.

*Galtonia candicans* (Summer Hyacinth) bulbs are not hardy for our area but when grown in containers will achieve heights of up to 4'. They like full sun but will tolerate a bit of shade, need lots of water and fertilizer. The long, white, fragrant flower spikes each have up to 20 flower bells, blooming July through September.

*Gladiolus* corms planted in full sun in warm spring soil will grow and develop into those fantastic summer flowers we all grew up with. If planted with the indentation facing downward, there is less likelihood that you will get wobbly stems. These plants prefer soil that is somewhat acidic but generally do fine in loosely structured, healthy garden soil. Storing the corms indoors over winter will give you an opportunity to enjoy these and their offspring for many years.

Perennials

*Aruncus dioicus* (Goat's Beard) is hardy to zone 3 and will attain heights of up to 6' if happy. Dwarf cultivars (*A. aethusifolius*) are currently in production. They like shade but will take some sun. The beautiful creamy panicles that emerge are quite impressive.

*Carex* (Sedge) are plants that have triangular shaped blades and are often misnamed "grasses". Many are hardy to zone 5 although there are always new species emerging that are hardier. Colors of the blades range from greens to blues to browns with varying growing conditions associated with each species. Generally they are happy under normal garden conditions when appropriate sun and moisture are provided.

*Caryopteris* (Bluebeard or Blue Mist) is a somewhat fragrant, dieback perennial yet it comes back stronger each year with regular spring pruning. Green to blue-

green foliage is followed by purple to bluish flowers along the stem. This plant is hardy to zone 4, tolerates full sun and dry conditions and does well with our cool summer evenings. If you like variegated foliage plants, look for 'Snow Fairy'. The delicate green leaves with white edging are reminiscent of snow cover from a far. When in flower, the blue coloring is delightful.

*Eryngium* (Sea Holly) is hardy to zone 4, does grow well in normal garden soils but will tolerate dry, adverse conditions. This species is happiest in full summer sun as long as the evenings are cool. Height among the species varies from 1' to 6'. The bluish spiked blooms and foliage can be quite intense, although *E. planum* is labeled as the least spiny. Many of you will know *E. yuccifolium* as a one of our impressive native plants – the rattlesnake master.

*Helianthus x multiflorus* (Sunflower) are related to the annual flowers (*H. annuus*) many of us are familiar with. But the perennial species are quite different in form. The flowers are smaller, yellow to orangish in color and the plants are multi-stemmed reaching to about 5'. They love full sun, lots of water, some fertilizer, and are hardy to zone 4.

*Helleborus* (Lenten Rose) has been named the 2005 perennial of the year. These spring flowering plants love the cool weather and will often hold their flowers until May. Depending on the species, they are hardy to zone 3. Height is generally from 1' – 2' with color running a wide range; most like to grow in moist, shady locations and do not like having their roots disturbed.

*Perovskia* (Russian Sage) is a delight in the garden when happy. The light purplish flower color and upright (sometimes) form is reminiscent of lavender, when viewed from a distance. Hardy to zone 5, it thrives in full sun and should be cut back in the late fall to allow for early spring growth.

*Sanguisorba* (Burnet) is hardy to zone 3, likes cool moist soil but will tolerate less than ideal growing conditions if watered. Heights among the species will vary from 2'- 5'. The fine textured medium green leaves are topped by small, pretty white to reddish tight flower heads that dance in the breeze.