



Columbia Nursery

Planting & Managing Spring Bulbs in Northwest Montana (Zones 3-5)

Planting spring bulbs adds vibrant color and early-season beauty to your garden. Proper care ensures long-lasting blooms and healthy plants year after year.

What Are Spring-Planted Bulbs?

Spring-planted bulbs are those planted in late spring, after the last frost, for summer blooms. Unlike fall bulbs, they do not tolerate freezing in the ground.

Popular Spring Bulbs for Zones 3-5:

- Gladiolus
- Dahlias
- Begonias (Tuberous varieties)
- Cannas
- Lilies (Asiatic and Oriental)
- Calla Lilies
- Elephant Ears (Colocasia, Alocasia)

These bulbs are ideal for summer flowering and do well in Northwest Montana when properly cared for.

When to Plant:

- Wait until after the last frost date (typically early to mid-June in Zones 3-5).
- Soil temperature should be at least 60°F for tender summer bulbs.

Choosing a Site:

- Select a location with full sun to partial shade depending on the bulb variety.
- Ensure the site has good drainage to prevent bulb rot.

Preparing the Bed:

- Loosen soil to a depth of 8–12 inches.
- Mix in compost or peat moss for organic matter.
- Use a balanced fertilizer (10-10-10 or 16-16-16) at planting time.

Planting Guidelines:

- Follow package instructions for specific depth and spacing.
- General rule: plant bulbs 2–3 times deeper than the bulb's height.



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- Place bulbs pointed side up.

Watering & Care:

- Water thoroughly after planting and keep the soil consistently moist but not soggy.
- Mulch to conserve moisture and suppress weeds.
- Stake taller plants like Gladiolus to prevent wind damage.

Post-Bloom Care:

- Allow foliage to yellow and die back naturally—this helps store energy for next year.
- For tender bulbs (Dahlias, Gladiolus, Begonias, Cannas, Elephant Ears):
 - - Dig up bulbs after first frost.
 - - Clean and store in a cool, dry, frost-free location over winter.

Tips for Success:

- Rotate bulb plantings to prevent disease buildup.
- Group bulbs in clusters for visual impact.
- Mix heights and bloom times for continuous color.

Need Help?

Visit Columbia Nursery for high-quality spring bulbs, fertilizers, and expert planting advice. We're happy to help you create a summer garden that thrives in Northwest Montana!