

Plant Fall Bulbs for Spring Color in the Landscape

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service — Galveston County Office



October 17, 2018



Dr. William Johnson is a horticulturist with the Galveston County Office of Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service. Visit his website at <http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/galveston>.

News column printed in the Galveston Daily News, The Post, and other Galveston County Newspapers.

Amaryllis is a popular bulb that dependably provides stellar performances in local landscapes over the month of April. The Master Gardeners' Fall Plant Sale on October 20 will offer several varieties of Amaryllis in a range of colors (pictured above is Elvas Amaryllis).

As gardeners, we've become accustomed to driving to nearby nurseries and purchasing flats or pots of blooming bedding plants to create an "instant flower garden." However, this drive-and-get-it approach, will simply not work when using spring-flowering bulbs in the landscape.

Planting spring bulbs in the fall is as natural as falling leaves and football games. It is an opportunity oftentimes neglected by the home gardener if he or she does not include some of the hardy, easy-to-grow spring beauties in the garden this fall.

Bulbs are truly some of

the simplest of flowers to grow, easy to care for, and inexpensive. All they ask for is a fall planting, and they will reward you with weeks of early spring color, fragrance, and beauty.

Over the years, I have transitioned portions of my home landscape to bulbs. The great variety



of bloom color, flowering time, plant height and shape makes bulbs a good addition to any landscape or garden.

Spring-flowering bulbs are those that generally bloom in our climate between February and April. You may see information dividing these bulbs into categories based on when they bloom in the spring – such as very early, early, mid-season, late and very late. Choosing different types of bulbs that fall into more than one of these categories will help you have flowers over a longer season.

Planting bulbs is especially rewarding because you always get a pleasant surprise in the spring when they start popping up around the garden. After flowering, many types of bulbs then die back, giving way to other later blooming flowers that will take their place. It's like having a succession of flowers in a small space.

The arrival of a “genuine” cool front on Monday signaled that fall has finally arrived. Most spring flowering bulbs are planted in the fall. Now is the time to easily add additional wonder to your gardens.

The Galveston County Master Gardeners offered a large selection of bulbs at their Fall Plant Sale last year and home gardeners quickly snapped up the bulbs in short order. The inventory of bulbs has been increased for this year's Master Gardener Plant Sale scheduled for Saturday, October 20.

Bulbs offered for sale are proven performers for our Gulf Coast growing region and do not require special handling prior to planting (such as pre-chilling). These bulbs can be placed directly in the ground and, if planted properly, they will naturalize or perennialize in our region—meaning they multiply and continue to bring blooms to your landscape season after season.

There will be 13 different varieties of Amaryllis, 3 different varieties of Narcissus/Daffodils, in addition to Oxblood Lily, Lycoris (Spider Lily), Spanish Bluebells and more. Complete growing and care instructions will be provided with each bulb package.

Other plants to be available include a wide selection of perennials and ornamentals, ranging from tropical plants to plants for butterfly and hummingbird gardens, that are known to be Texas-Tuff performers in our Texas Gulf Coast growing area.

Fall is an ideal time to plant perennials in home landscapes. The Upper Gulf Coast has several months of cooler temperatures and dependable moisture from October through April.

Perennials planted during fall will have time to establish a good root system during these more moderate conditions. This head start supports strong growth, long-term health and overall plant vigor.

The fall and winter seasons present

fewer pest problems as well. All in all, there are fewer sources of stress (such as heat, fluctuations in soil moisture levels, and insect pressure) on specimens planted in the fall.

As one of my gardening friends commented: "Gardening with perennials is like painting with a full palette of colors, textures, forms and fragrances." Think of your home landscape as a canvas and then create your perennial garden of color that pumps out beautiful foliage and flowers for years to come.

The selection of perennials that will be offered at this year's event will augment local landscapes with an amazing variety of color, texture, size, shape and versatility. Many of the selections are suitable for habitat gardens to attract birds, butterflies and hummingbirds.

The Fall Plant Sale will be conducted at the Galveston County Fairgrounds Arena in Hitchcock along Hwy. 6. A preview seminar will be offered at 8:00 a.m. and the plant sale yard will be open from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. A limited number of wagons will be available and gardeners are encouraged to bring their own wagons! Come early for best selections. Visit our website (<http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/galveston/>) to view or download a color catalogue with descriptions of all plants to be available at the sale.

