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How many of you enjoy the

beautiful tulips, daffodils, hyacinths and crocus that brighten up flower beds? Now is the time to start thinking about planting these hardy fall bulbs so their beautiful flowers can be enjoyed next spring.

Hardy fall bulbs need to be planted by mid to late October to have the potential to bloom next spring. This type of flower bulb needs to be planted in the ground to establish their root system, and go through an extended cold period before they will bloom.

Here are some simple tips for preparing and planting bulb beds:

- Choose a location that has partial shade to full sun. Overly shaded areas may not produce as many high quality potential blooms.
 - Mix mulch or compost material 10 inches deep into the proposed bulb bed to increase aeration and soil drainage.
 - Select healthy bulbs that do not have any cuts, soft or rotten spots. As a general rule, the larger the size of bulb in each species, the higher the quality of flower potential next spring.
 - Bulbs will have different maturing times. Gardeners can choose to have bulbs bloom all at the same time, or at different times to offer bulb flower bloom variation.
 - Be creative when selecting flower color and textures to make color combinations that fit your landscaping tastes.
 - Space tulips and daffodils four to six inches apart from each other. Small bulbs such as crocus should be spaced one to two inches from each other.
 - Planting depth depends on the type and size of the bulb. For example, tulips, hyacinth and daffodil bulbs should be planted at a depth that is two or three inches times the width of the bulb. Tulips and hyacinths should be planted about six inches deep. Daffodils should be planted six to eight inches deep.
 - Place bulbs in the planting hole with the pointed side on top. The flower will develop out of the pointed top, and push out of the soil.
- The roots are found on the bottom of the wide bottom part of the bulb. Do not plant these bulbs upside down!
- Plant bulbs in clumps with the proper spacing to achieve a “mass effect” for an eye-catching display.
 - After planting the bulbs, replace half of the soil and mulch mixture and water the area. After the water and soil have settled, fill in with the rest of the soil and mulch mixture on top. This will reduce large air pockets in the soil. Lightly pat the soil down to avoid compaction.
 - Fertilize newly planted or existing bulbs with bone meal or other forms of bulb fertilizer. Follow the label directions.

Give the bulb bed one more light drink of water.

- After a hard freeze, apply a two to three inch layer of mulch to help further insulate the bulb beds.
- Fertilize the bulbs with a 10-10-10 fertilizer after the bulbs bloom in the spring.
- If you have any questions about planting hardy fall bulbs, please contact me at dlott2@unl.edu, or contact your local University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension Office. Have a great week!

