Now is the time to plant spring-flowering bulbs

K-State horticulture expert says bulbs should establish roots in the fall

By Maddy Rohr, K-State Research and Extension news service

MANHATTAN, Kan. — Planning ahead this fall can result in a colorful spring landscape of tulips, daffodils, crocus and more, said Kansas State University horticulture expert Cynthia Domenghini.

Domenghini said spring-flowering bulbs can be planted from now through October, giving bulbs time to establish roots before a required chilling period during winter months.

“Choose an area with full sun to part shade,” Domenghini said. “Ideally the soil should be a sandy loam, but if not, it can be amended by adding compost to a depth of at least one foot.”

She recommends incorporating fertilizer as well. The soil pH should be between 6.0 and 7.0.

“Determine the planting depth based on the bulb size. Planting depth refers to the distance from the bottom of the hole, where the base of the bulb will rest, to the surface of the soil once the hole is backfilled,” Domenghini said.

Bulbs the size of tulips and hyacinths are typically planted six inches deep while daffodil-size bulbs should be 6-8 inches deep.

“In general, bulbs should be planted 2-3 times as deep as their width,” Domenghini said.

She suggests spacing large bulbs 4-6 inches apart and small bulbs 1-2 inches apart.

“Mass plantings create a more aesthetically pleasing display when spring blooms emerge,” Domenghini said.

Though gardeners will not see above-ground growth in the fall, roots are still growing, she said.
“Keep the soil moist and add mulch after the soil freezes to provide insulation and prevent bulbs from being heaved out of the soil,” Domenghini said.

Domenghini and her colleagues in K-State's Department of Horticulture and Natural Resources produce a weekly Horticulture Newsletter with tips for maintaining home landscapes and gardens. The newsletter is available to view online or can be delivered by email each week.

Interested persons can also send their garden and yard-related questions to Domenghini at cdom@ksu.edu, or contact your local K-State Research and Extension office.

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K-State Research and Extension local offices, https://www.ksre.k-state.edu/about/statewide-locations.html

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