Summer Bulbs: It's Never Too Early
Five reasons to consider planting summer-blooming bulbs.

KENNETT SQUARE, PA (March 2021) In the midst of a cold, harsh winter, the idea of summer warms our soul. The gardener and outdoor enjoyer in all of us seeks solace and sun by turning our thoughts to what's new to experience in flower gardens and patio containers. Have you considered summer bulbs? Even with the season months away, now's the time to ponder all the possibilities of summer-blooming bulbs and snatch them up before it's too late.

Old School Is In Style
It's not just high-waisted jeans that are back in vogue. Old-fashioned flowers are all the rage, too. Gladiolas, a favorite summer bulb of many a grandmother, are seeing a resurgence in popularity, adding height, drama, and floral elegance to the garden. Art Deco-esque calla lilies are making a comeback, too, as are the many shades and flower types of dahlias.

Planting with Purpose
Whatever annual flowers can do; summer bulbs can do—even better, and they come back year after year.

- **Cut flower gardens.** Speaking of old-school garden ideas, cut flower gardens—flowers planted specifically for harvesting and enjoying as arrangements—are seeing a surge in interest as people spend more time working from home and living the indoor-outdoor lifestyle. Harvest a vaseful of gladiolas, stems of anemones, or bunches of beautiful lilies for the home office or the patio table.
- **Pollinator plants.** Many summer bulbs provide much-needed sustenance for the garden's pollinating visitors. Bees love alliums, agapanthus, and crocosmia. Red hot poker is a friend to butterflies. Liatris, gladiolas, and dahlias are also frequently visited by both bees and butterflies.
- **Floral fragrance.** Want to add the allure of fragrance as well as beauty to the garden? Look no further than two of the most sweet-scented flowers you'll find—Asiatic lilies and freesia. Other fragrant summer bulbs are crinum, Abyssinian lily, and spider lily. Once their perfume catches the wind, garden visitors will be lured their way. And as cut flowers, they will sweeten your home for days.

Pairing Possibilities
Combining your summer bulbs with other items in your garden is a smart way to double their impact. For example, ornamental grass with heft and height will help support tall and slender gladioli if they should start to bend, not to mention it'll help make the glad's flowers pop. Have a favorite spring-blooming bulb container combo? Continue the color theme for many more months by layering

similarly colored summer bloomers in the same pot. Or, plant some heavier flower-topped bulbs such as allium and agapanthus near pieces of "garden whimsy" so their blooms interact and engage with the art. The pairing possibilities are endless.

Single Sweeps
Nothing creates more drama in the garden than planting en masse. The single sweep of color is stop-in-your tracks audacious. Whether it's two dozen of the same variety of alliums or two dozen bulbs of many different flowers in a similar shade, the mass of color is a scene-stealer.

Hot Commodities
While not necessarily tropical plants, combos of summer bulbs can create a sizzling tropical color palette. Bring hot colors to the garden with the reds and yellows of crocosmia, the dark pinks of crinum, the unusual orange and yellow hues of homeria, the fiery colors of tritionia, and the colorful array of all the lilies.

The thought of these hot colors alone could be enough to sustain you until spring. But it's best to take action now and shop for the varieties you want in your garden this summer. They are hot commodities, after all.

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