

Column Name- The Heartland Minute

By: Lindsay Shorter

K-State Research and Extension Greenwood County

Agriculture Extension Agent

*“Time to Plant Spring-Flowering Bulbs”*

Hands down, without a doubt, fall is my favorite time of year. I love the chilly air, football games, trees changing colors, some of my favorite hunting seasons are right around the corner... but I digress. Fall is also the perfect time to start thinking ahead to spring, and what “pops” of color we want throughout our flower bed, in the form of flowering bulbs.

Late September through October is an excellent time to plant spring-flowering bulbs such as crocus, tulips and daffodils, according to K-State Horticulture Specialist Ward Upham. These plants need to develop roots in the fall and must meet a chilling requirement over the winter in order to bloom in the spring.

When considering where you would like these flowers next spring, there are a few things to consider when choosing a landscape area. Choose a planting site that has full sun to partial shade. The ideal soil would be a sandy loam, but even poor soils can be used if organic material such as peat moss, compost, or aged bark is mixed in.

Bulbs need good aeration as well as good drainage for proper development. It is best if the bulbs are given 12 inches of prepared soil. For example, if one-third organic material were added, this would require mixing 4 inches of organic material with 8 inches of soil. Incorporate about 3 pounds of a complete fertilizer such as a 5-10-5 per 100 square feet during preparation or fertilize according to soil test. If you have not completed a flower garden soil test, please visit the office and we can assist you with this process.

Another thing to consider when planting bulbs is planting depths, as they vary depending on the size of the bulbs. A good rule of thumb is bulbs are to be planted two to three times as deep as their width. Planting depth is the distance from the bottom of the bulb to the top of the soil. Large bulbs are normally spaced 4 to 6 inches apart, and small bulbs are about 1 to 2 inches. One of the biggest tips I give gardeners in regards to landscape design is to plant in clumps or irregular masses rather than planting singly, this gives a better display and balance to your landscape.

After placing the bulbs at the proper depth, replace half the soil and add water. This will settle the soil around the bulbs and provide good bulb/soil contact. Add the remaining soil and water again. Although there will be no top growth this fall, the roots are developing, so soil needs to be kept moist but not soggy. Mulch can be added after the soil has frozen to prevent small bulbs from being heaved out of the soil by alternate freezing and thawing.

For more information regarding Agriculture and Natural Resources, 4-H Youth Development, or K-State Research and Extension call the office at 620-583-7455, email me, Lindsay Shorter, at [lindsayshorter@ksu.edu](mailto:lindsayshorter@ksu.edu), or stop by the office which is located inside the courthouse. Be sure to follow K-State Research and Extension- Greenwood County on Facebook for the most up-to-date information on Extension education programs and the Greenwood County 4-H program.