

## GARDEN SPOT

## Bulb seminar provides knowledge, inspiration



MARTY FIGLEY

More than 40 people attended the recent two-day bulb seminar with Charles Cresson, which was sponsored by Telly's Greenhouse in Troy and The Gardeners Guild. Cresson provided much information and inspiration; I shall try to share some random thoughts.

Flowering plants that grow well with bulbs include forget-me-nots, wallflowers, pansies and dark blue grape hyacinths. Try color combinations of yellow and red, blue iris with violas and tall allium, white with deep purple, and orange and yellow mixtures. A few white blooms peeking out of pachysandra or vinca add interest, as do the yellow or white blooms of daffodils. Think of color combinations and bloom times when you plan the gardens.

A pedestal planter can be changed for the season and surrounded by wood hyacinths in the spring then over planted with annuals such as impatiens for the rest of the summer.

## Placing

Plant early blooming things close to the house so you can enjoy them as soon as they appear. Dwarf species tulips do well in a rock garden or on a raised bed bank.

Plant tulip bulbs eight to nine inches deep when they are to remain in the ground. Bedding tulips need only to be planted six inches deep. For optimum results, bulb sites should face in the following directions: first south, then east, west and finally north.

Evergreen boughs provide good mulch for bulb beds because they trap more snow, thus provide better cover. Don't tie the bulb foliage because it absorbs the sunlight for energy to feed the bulbs.

Daffodils should be planted by mid-October to develop strong roots before winter. Mulch to keep the soil warm. Tulips and grape hyacinths can be chilled before planting. Fall blooming bulbs should be planted in early fall; the ideal time is mid-August — six inches deep. Two good crocus to grow are Thomasine and Crocus Speciosus. Narcissus hybrids will generally multiply best if planted four to six inches deep.

"If rodents eat the bulbs, kill them ... after chipmunks have done a certain amount of damage, they're no longer too cute to kill," Cresson said.

He suggested making cages of 1/2-inch rat wire (or use plastic containers) and planting the bulbs in them. Squirrels can't eat crocus with wire placed six inches over the top of the bed. Scilla bulbs aren't bothered by animals.



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**Bright bulbs: Tulips and hyacinths can be forced for early spring color.**

## Hyacinths

Daffodil hybrids are better adapted to our gardens than are the species or wild ones. Species tulips are those found in the wild — not hybridized. Buy small hyacinth bulbs for the garden — they will produce blooms that don't fall over. If bulbs are diseased with either striped or mosaic virus, which is spread by aphids, dig all the infected bulb out and destroy. The soil should still be clean.

Fertilize all bulbs in the fall when roots begin to grow and again in the early spring when foliage begins to grow. Don't put fertilizer in the bottom of the planting hole — roots can be burned.

Force bulbs in small pots so they can be moved from one location to another to change the decorating scene as wanted. Large hyacinth bulbs are best for forcing. Two good bulbs for forcing are the tulip "Apricot Beauty" and daffodil "February Gold." Tulips that have been forced are usually not strong enough for future bloom, but daffodils will recover after forcing and gain full strength in the garden.

Bulbs require good drainage, rich soil, sun or light deciduous shade. Dig (and mix in amendments) to a depth of 12 inches; six to 7.5 is the ideal pH range. Generally plant 2 1/4 times the height of the bulb.

The Gardeners Guild will present a garden symposium March 2, 1996. Watch for details.

## Forcing bulbs

Force hardy bulbs for early indoor bloom. Do it now, or store in refrigerator until needed.

Fill the pot 1/4 to two-thirds with free-draining potting mix. Place bulbs in the moist mixture, tamp to settle and recover bulbs with additional soil. Water until it drains out holes well, then place in

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