

GARDENING

Light up your garden with beautiful bulbs

GARDEN SPOT



MARTY FIGLEY

It might seem early to be talking about bulbs, but if you want a specific plant, especially if it is a new variety, it's time to place your order.

Last fall I planted several new (to me) bulbs and I was especially pleased with the show Anemone blanda put on in the spring.

Blanda means white; these have yellow centers. The daisy-like florets on 3- to 4-inch stems. They would look spectacular beneath late-blooming daffodils or May-blooming tulips or to add a soft white accent in the bed.

These precious little flowers look very pretty if planted thickly and also do well in rock gardens, in a shrub border or in the lawn. They thrive in full sun or partial shade and require well-drained soil. You might want to try your hand at forcing some of

them. If you would like another color, A. blandas are also available in Blue Shades, ranging from pale to dark blue, all with yellow centers.

The daisy-shaped flowers of Pink Star (white center) and Splendour are quite nice, as are the pinkish purple blooms of Radar. This one has a tuft of golden stamens surrounded by a white halo. Violet Star's large blooms are amethyst-violet with white centers. Finally, White Splendour is the most robust of the blandas and produce taller and whiter mounds with more flowers that are bright white.

The plants I grow are Heirloom, pre-1700, and are soft and delicate.

You may wish to mix a variety of bulbs to have a soft patchwork effect in the garden rather like a baby's quilt.

These are so-called minor bulbs, which often bloom early and naturalize readily. Snowdrops and Winter Aconites are also called minor bulbs, but I don't believe for a minute that their anticipated arrival and beauty would designate them minor.

By the way, another name for

Anemones is Windflower.

Suggestions

Brent and Becky Heath, bulb growers in Gloucester, Va., suggest soaking these bulbs in water overnight before planting and plant them shallow, on edges. You can order from them or order a catalog toll-free: (877)811-2852.

If you have been frustrated by damage to your flowering bulbs, even before they bloom, you might want to soak them in a solution of Bulb Guard before you plant them. In the spring when you see flowers sprouting, you then could spray an application on the leaves and shoots. Bulb Guard is all-natural and produced by the Deer-Off products family.

Scott Kunst of Old House Gardens of Ann Arbor (phone (734) 995-1486) carries many antique bulbs. He suggests spraying Ro-Pol to keep animals from the bulbs. If you choose to use it as a bulb dip before planting, be sure to wear rubber gloves. Might be a good idea for Bulb Guard, too.

Kunst also sells plastic bulb-planting baskets (either 9- or 12-inch round) for rare tulips, glads and other bulbs you lift and

store, since they keep the varieties separate, and "you never leave a bulb behind."

Plastic tomato "boxes" also work, although they aren't as large as those Kunst offers.

The Netherlands Flower Bulb Information Center reminds us: Plant bulbs as soon as the ground is cool (evening temperatures between 40 and 50 degrees). Read the label to keep like colors together. Plant bulbs in any sunny place and be sure the soil drains well. Prepare beds by digging so the soil is loose and workable. If a new bed, add some organic matter.

Plant the pointy end up. Plant big bulbs about 6 inches deep; small bulbs about 6 inches.

No fertilizer is necessary for the first year's bloom. If bulbs are to naturalize or return for several years, or for those that are blooming for the second year, spread an organic fertilizer or a slow-release bulb food on top of the soil.

Here's more: Never mix fertilizer in the planting hole. Don't use bone meal. Modern bone meal adds little nutritional



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Not bland: Anemone blanda has daisylike blooms with fernlike foliage.

value. Plant bulbs in clusters. Plant low bulbs in front of tall growers. Try a double-decker effect: Layer small bulbs on top of larger ones.

Marty Figley is an advanced master gardener based in Birmingham. You can leave her a message by dialing (734) 953-2047 on a touch-tone phone. Her fax number is (248) 644-1314.

PLUMBING TIPS

DO YOU RUN OUT OF HOT WATER?



JEFFREY MOSS

Are you always running out of hot water when you take a shower? Does your family have to wait until your water heater recovers to take another shower? Let me introduce you to the newest water heater on the market today. It is called the Takagi Instantaneous water heater.

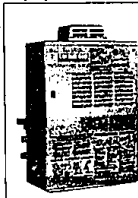
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Jeffrey Moss is vice president of Advance Plumbing Supply Co. in Walled Lake and Detroit. Call (800) 560-7474 toll-free. Have a plumbing question? Write to Jeffrey at Advance Plumbing Supply Co., 1977 E.W. Maple Rd., Walled Lake, MI 48390. www.advanceplumbing.com

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