

# Summer Bulbs

**Dahlias** – A northwest summer garden staple. Varieties ranging in all different flower forms and different sizes and every color in the rainbow. Try newer dwarfish ones along borders for outstanding color and you may be surprised – they might just come back and surprise you! Bloom summer till frost. Dig to insure overwintering unless you have perfect drainage.

**Oriental/Asiatic Lilies** – The queen of the summer bulbs – outstanding color and fragrance on most. Numerous short varieties for borders and pots (like Pixies). Great tall flavors to tuck into existing gardens and mix with other summer annuals and perennials. Most are winter hardy left outside. Asiatic varieties bloom early to mid-summer and Oriental hybrids bloom mid to late summer. Tiger Lilies will extend bloom into September.

**Calla Lilies** – Exotic old fashioned white calla lilies are not alone. Look for hot colors in pinks, yellows, reds, and oranges – and most are dwarf (1') with speckled foliage. Great in containers and mixed with annuals for summer impact. All summer bloom. Dig to insure overwintering – except white.

**Cannas** – Canna Lilies produce bold tropical foliage and vivid bloom stalks in the heat of the summer. They are excellent grown in containers and many will even tolerate boggy conditions – even as a pond plant for summer color. There are numerous worthy hybrids but look for many with exquisite dark red foliage or striped foliage. The Topicanna series is most striking but there are numerous fabulous ones if you can find them. Mid-summer bloom. Dig to insure overwintering.

**Tuberous Begonias** – Another old-fashioned beauty that has become harder to find. These true begonias bloom all summer, need mostly shade, and are easy to overwinter and store for many years of enjoyment. Most colors are available and can be utilized in shady containers, hanging baskets and along shade garden borders for summer color. Dig to insure overwintering.

**Caladiums** – Extremely colorful tropical foliage for the shade garden. Leaves come splashed with all kinds of shades of white, pink and red. Most grow 2' tall or so and need no deadheading – just spectacular foliage and no bloom. Look for exotic flavors in mail order catalogs for a stunning container plant.

**Eucomis** – Pineapple Lily – An interesting bulbous plant becoming more popular around the NW. Big thick foliage clumps give rise to 2' stalks of creamy white, green and pink flowers topped with what looks just like a pineapple. These are almost hardy and most will come back year after year with adequate drainage but dig to insure overwintering.

**Acidanthera** – Fragrant Gladiolus – stunning bloomer comes white with purple throat. Intensely fragrant and long blooming these beauties are awesome in containers or in gardens (3' tall). Early to midsummer bloom. Almost hardy here but dig to insure overwintering.

**Hedychium** – Hardy Ginger or Butterfly Ginger. Another tropical looking beauty with hot color and fragrance. Fragrant blooms in white, apricot, pink and yellow stand up to 5' high. Think Maui – but in your summer garden! A few varieties are around and available for purchase in season and usually will

come back year after year if located properly. Treat as houseplant overwinter if needed. Mid to late summer bloom.

**Taro** – Colocasia and Alocasia - Elephant ears – One of the most popular foliage plants for summer pots. If you search you can find many flavors these days ranging from green to burgundy to black. Some compact ones reach only 2' while others get leaves up to 4' long! They thrive in pots in part shade as centerpiece and will even take some water as well. Try as houseplant over winter months, greenhouse, or treat as annual.

**Gladiolus** – Memories of my grandmother's garden. The top summer cut flower over generations. From 6' tall giants to my favorites – the Glamini dwarf glads – the selection of colors in endless. Lots of brighter bold colors are available as well as softer pastels – whichever fits your pleasure. Stake tall ones to keep upright. Try the Glamini – awesome blooming machines for summer containers and in the garden – and only around 2' tall. Mid to late summer color and hardy left in ground.

**Crocsmia** – Monbretia – Truly a summertime hummingbird magnet. Hot flower colors in yellow, orange and red and attractive sword like foliage. Great cut flower and long lasting in the garden. Be careful – some of these can be quite vigorous and very large! Good old 'Lucifer' makes quite a statement at 5'+ if you have the room – but many others like 'Emily McKenzie' and 'George Davidson' are much tidier at 3' or so. Great mid-summer color and plenty hardy to just leave alone for the winter.

**Lycoris** – Surprise Lily – An interesting summer bloomer that is harder to find. Awesome in pots or in the ground. Send up foot clumps of foliage in spring which then disappear by summer - leaving 3' stalks of fragrant pink blooms over summer. Looks like Amaryllis. Hardy to zone 5 but must have good drainage if left outdoors for winter. Worth a search!

**Polianthus** – Tuberose – Another harder to find exotic from Mexico that is intensely fragrant especially at night. White flowers are borne on 3' stalks above 18" clumps of grassy foliage. Perfect for container growing or using in the sunny garden. Mid to late summer color. Almost hardy but dig to ensure overwintering.

**Freesia** – Grown for their intense fragrance and especially long lasting blooms in summer. Great in containers and along sunny borders for summer color. Great cut flower as well. Short growers - to one foot tall foliage and blooms. Long summer color. Treat as annual or dig to insure overwintering.

**Ixia** – African Corn Lily – Prized for its rainbow of colors. Excellent choice for containers in hot sunny locations or along dry sunny garden spots. Not too much water! Short 18" tall plants. Great planted in masses. Dig to insure overwintering unless you have perfect drainage – then try mulch over winter.

**Tigridia** – Mexican Shell Flower – Available in most colors but usually it's the hot reds and oranges that appeal for summer. Excellent for container accents and along hot sunny borders. 18" tall. Long blooming season from July till frost in most years. Mulch in fall around here or dig to insure overwintering.

**\*Numerous plants from Trilliums to the Toad Lily to Anemones to lots and lots of others out there!**

**\*Notice a theme here..... Good cut flowers, fragrance, and vivid summer colors. Plant some!**

## General Rules for Summer Bulbs

- Plant generally at depth of 3 times size of bulb unless different on package.
- Drainage, drainage, and more drainage for most.
- Use lots of compost and manure – all like moist well drained soil.
- Use low nitrogen fertilizer – they don't need much but some bone meal or organic bulb food.
- Wait till after last frost to plant most all these. When? Who knows.....
- Shop now for best selection and variety.
- Lots of Dahlia tuber shows/sales coming up around the area.
- Lots of goodies available by internet/catalog growers also.
- Watch weather in fall and get them dug and stored when appropriate.
- Sawdust/Peat Moss/Vermiculite?
- When storing keep in dry cool place and check frequently for desiccation and rots.
- Divide again in spring before replanting.
- Try planting some in containers mixed with annuals/perennials or massed alone.