

Bulb Planting Depth & *Spacing Chart*

How deep and how far apart for 20 popular bulbs, corms and tubers — so you only have to look it up once a year.

20 BULBS · PLANTING TIME · DEPTH & SPACING · FLOWERING TIME



The depth & spacing rule, in one line

IF YOU REMEMBER NOTHING ELSE

Plant most bulbs two to three times as deep as the bulb itself is tall, and space them roughly twice the bulb's width apart. A bulb about 5cm tall goes in a hole 10–15cm deep.

DEPTH

Measured from the base of the bulb to the soil surface, not the top of the bulb. On heavy clay, plant slightly shallower; on light sandy soil, slightly deeper.

SPACING

Closer planting gives a fuller look sooner but means lifting and dividing clumps sooner too. For a natural look, scatter bulbs and plant them where they land.

WHICH WAY UP

The pointed end, or the side with old roots, faces down. Genuinely can't tell? Plant it on its side — most bulbs will find their own way up.

FLOWERING TIME

A typical UK window — mild or sheltered gardens often run a couple of weeks earlier, exposed or northern ones a little later.

EXCEPTIONS TO THE DEPTH RULE

A few bulbs break the 2–3x rule on purpose: nerines and dahlias are planted shallow, with the neck or tuber top sitting at or just below the surface, and tuberous begonias are barely covered at all, hollow side up. Planting these too deep is the single most common reason they fail to flower.

NATURALISING IN GRASS

For a wild, drifted look — the classic daffodil or snowdrop meadow effect — scatter a handful of bulbs across the lawn and plant each one exactly where it falls, rather than in rows.

1 of 3 — Spring-flowering, planted in autumn

BULB	PLANT	DEPTH	SPACING	FLOWERS
Snowdrop <i>Galanthus nivalis</i>	Sep–Oct (dry); Mar–Apr "in the green"	~7cm	5–8cm	Jan–Feb
Iris reticulata <i>Iris reticulata</i>	September–October	8–10cm	5–8cm	Jan–Feb
Crocus <i>Crocus spp.</i>	September–October	7–10cm	5–8cm	Feb–Mar
Anemone blanda <i>Anemone blanda</i>	Sep–Oct (soak tubers overnight first)	5cm	10cm	Mar–Apr
Scilla <i>Scilla siberica</i>	September–October	8–10cm	5–8cm	Mar–Apr
Grape hyacinth <i>Muscari armeniacum</i>	September–November	8–10cm	5–8cm	Mar–Apr

Continued on the next page →

2 of 3 — Spring-flowering, planted in autumn

BULB	PLANT	DEPTH	SPACING	FLOWERS
Daffodil <i>Narcissus spp.</i>	September–November	10–15cm	10–15cm	Mar–Apr
Hyacinth <i>Hyacinthus orientalis</i>	September–November	10–15cm	10–15cm	Mar–Apr
Snake's head fritillary <i>Fritillaria meleagris</i>	September–October	10cm	10cm	April
English bluebell <i>Hyacinthoides non-scripta</i>	September–October	10cm	10cm	Apr–May
Tulip <i>Tulipa spp.</i>	November, after the first frosts	15–20cm	10–15cm	Apr–May
Allium <i>Allium spp.</i>	September–October	15–20cm (~4x bulb width)	8cm (small) – 20cm (large)	May–Jun

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3 of 3 — Summer & autumn-flowering

BULB	PLANT	DEPTH	SPACING	FLOWERS
Lily <i>Lilium spp.</i>	Early autumn ideally, or spring	~15cm (2–3x bulb height)	15cm	Jun–Aug
Gladioli <i>Gladiolus spp.</i>	March–May, in batches for longer colour	10–15cm	10–15cm	Jul–Sep
Crocasmia <i>Crocasmia spp.</i>	March–April	8–10cm	10–20cm	Jul–Sep
Dahlia <i>Dahlia spp.</i>	Mid-April (under cover) or late May outdoors, after frost	Top of tuber just below the surface	60cm	Jul–Oct
Tuberous begonia <i>Begonia × tuberhybrida</i>	Start indoors Mar–Apr; plant out after frost	Barely covered, hollow side up	25–30cm	Jun–Oct
Freesia <i>Freesia spp.</i>	March–April outdoors (or August for winter pots)	5cm	5–8cm	Jul–Sep
Colchicum (autumn crocus) <i>Colchicum autumnale</i>	July–August	~10cm	15–23cm	Sep–Oct
Nerine <i>Nerine bowdenii</i>	July–August, as soon as bulbs are available	Shallow — neck left above soil	10cm	Sep–Oct

Depths and spacings are typical for average bulb sizes — a bigger-than-average bulb of any type can go a touch deeper. Heavy clay soil: add a handful of horticultural grit to the base of the hole to improve drainage and help prevent rot.

Remember what you planted and where

Log every bulb you plant — what, where and when — in your free Gardens & Gardening journal, so nothing gets dug up by accident next spring.



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