

# Bulbs, Corms, Rhizomes, and Tubers

## What are the differences and when are they planted?

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### BULBS

A bulb is an underground stem with fleshy, scale-like layers surrounding a center bud (the flower). The scales are the food-storing leaf bases attached to a basal plate (bottom where the roots grow).

- Amaryllis take 6 to 8 weeks to bloom, typically planted between October and February.
- Daffodils, alliums, onions and tulips are all fall planted.
- Plant lilies in the fall (Asiatic and Oriental) a few weeks before winter freeze.
- Dutch iris (*Iris hollandica*) are fall planted for late spring/early summer bloom.



### CORMS

Corms may look like hard brown pellets, but they're similar to bulbs with swollen underground stems that store food for the flower when dormant. They're different from bulbs in that they do not have scales or fleshy leaves and their growing tip (bud) is on the top of the corm instead of in the center of the bulb's scales. As the plant grows and uses up the stored food the corm shrivels, but then a new corm forms to create a new flower for the following year.

- Crocosmia are spring planted for late summer blooming.
- Ixia and sparaxis are both fall planted.
- Freesias and crocus are early fall planted for early spring bloom.
- Gladiolus are planted 2 weeks before last frost in spring. It takes 70 - 90 days until flowering. For regular flower spikes, plant a few corms every 2 weeks until early summer.

### RHIZOMES

Rhizomes are also underground stems that often grow horizontally.

- Bamboo, calla lilies, cannas, galangal, ginger, turmeric, and water lilies are all spring planted. Other than bamboo, they will all go dormant for the winter and then resprout in spring.
- Bearded iris are planted/divided in mid to late summer when they are dormant.
- Siberian iris are planted/divided in spring or early fall.
- Louisiana iris are planted in early fall.
- Japanese iris are planted in early spring or early fall. Avoid planting in the heat.

## TUBERS

Tubers are another type of leathery swollen stem with no basal plate. Tubers have eyes, aka growth nodes, from which the new plants grow. To propagate plants you dig up the plant and cut off healthy pieces of tuber, each with about 3 eyes on it.

- Dahlias and begonias are late spring planted. They are not cold hardy, thus must be dug and stored where winter temps drop below 20 degrees.
- Cyclamen, day lily, peony, and caladium are all spring planted.
- Anemones, sweet potatoes, and regular potatoes are planted in early spring.

For all of the above: when blooming is finished remove dead flowers, leaving all leaves. Do not tie nor cut the foliage down. Continue feeding and watering until leaves yellow and die back naturally, marking the end of their energy storage for next year's flowers. Just about the time that you have completely forgotten about them, they will come back up and fill your garden with drifts of color.



For more information about Master Gardener public education classes and activities, go to our UCCE Master Gardeners of Amador County website at <http://ucanr.edu/mgamador>. UCCE Master Gardeners of Amador County are available to answer home gardening questions Tuesday through Thursday, 10:00 a.m. to noon, by calling (209) 223-6838. Walk-ins are welcome at our office, located at 12200-B Airport Rd. in Jackson. You can also find us on Facebook. We offer free classes every month including, Building Healthy Soils on September 21. Learn about soil characteristics and methods for using common materials to build soil in a sustainable way. This class is free, open to the public and will be held at 12200-B Airport Rd. in Jackson. Join us!

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