

# Bulbs can brighten gardens, even in Central Texas climes

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Springtime is bulb time, even here in Central Texas. Sure there are bulbs such as tulips and crocus for colder climes, but other bulbs can — and do — fare fairly well here.

Here's the dirt on bulbs from my blog, Gardening in Central Texas:

Bulbous-type plants are some of the most overlooked options for the garden. I confess, this is one area of gardening in which I don't practice what I preach. Changes are on the way! How well we, who have lived in colder climates, remember the gorgeous daffodils, tulips, hyacinths, crocus, snowdrops, etc. that were harbingers of spring. Yet we don't think of using bulbs in our Central Texas garden — albeit different choices.

The truth is that we can have bulbous plant blooms that cover the entire garden season, from early spring until late fall. I look at bulbous plants as finishing touches to our ornamental gardens in Central Texas: The garden is not dependent on them for color or texture, but when they bloom, they add an exciting accent to the palette. However bulbous plants might be used as garden accents — be it to fill open areas between other garden plants or to provide temporary color to an area of dormant perennials — there are choices in sizes, sun tolerance and hardiness to temperatures and drought. Once established, little to no further care is required.

There are many lists of suggested plants in these categories from many excellent sources, so I won't attempt to re-create another. But I'll offer some suggestions for easy-to-grow choices for those beginning to use bulbous plants as part of their year-round garden.

**Early spring (plant in fall):** Paperwhite narcissus. These are clusters of small daffodil blooms on a single terminal stalk. Many daffodils, or narcissus, require colder temperatures than we have in Central Texas to initiate bloom. However, some paperwhite narcissus bloom regularly and reliably in our warmer region without special treatment. These will be the first to announce spring is coming.

**Spring (plant in fall or very early spring):** Iris (most varieties), gingers (when warm enough).

**Early summer (plant in fall or very early spring):**



William J. Scheick

Paperwhite narcissus can bloom regularly and reliably without much pampering in Central Texas. Plant the bulbs for these flower clusters in the fall; they bloom in early spring.

Daylilies rule! Iris, lilies, canna, crinums and Byzantine gladiolus.

**Summer (plant in early spring):** Caladiums for colorful foliage (they require winter digging), agapanthus (dwarf and tall), cannas, crinums, calla, bletilla (ground orchid), dietes (African iris), amaryllis (johnsonii — the hardy amaryllis — and other South African hybrid varieties), hymenocallis (spider lily).

**Early fall (plant in spring or fall):** Rhodophiala bifida (oxblood lily), Lycoris radiata ("naked ladies").

**Fall (plant in late summer):** Cyclamen will bloom into late fall; however, they must be protected from the summer heat (dug and stored over summer).



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'White Queen' caladium provides colorful foliage in the summer. Caladium and other bulbs can be used to fill in your garden.

multiply. When investing in new bulbous plants, take time to research their climate tolerance, adaptability, soil type/water and drainage needs, light requirements, and period of bloom.

Some bulbous plants that are purely tropical but add a lot of color to your warm season garden include the ever-popular caladium (shade only), dahlias, montbretia/crocasmia and tropical gingers, to mention just a few.

Bottom line is that you can have pleasant surprises pop up in your garden at different times of the year that add to the variety but don't take away from the evergreen and more permanent plantings that show year round. Working bulbs and bulbous plants into the garden palette offers yet another way to creatively create a year-round garden of interest and beauty.

Robert Beyer became a Texas Master Gardener in 2001 and writes about gardening and horticulture at [central-texasgardening.blogspot.com](http://central-texasgardening.blogspot.com).

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