

**Bulbs for All the Right Seasons!**  
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When we think of bulbs, our minds automatically go to tulips, daffodils and other spring bloomers. There are often underused bulbs that provide gardens with color year round, weather depending of course. This topic could go on for several pages but here are some bulbs that are easy to find, easy on the budget and are star performers for the southern gardener.

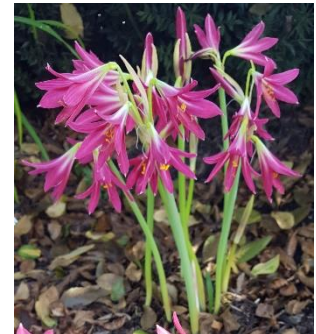
Consider waking your gardens up earlier in the season with splashes of color from the use of these winter performing bulbs. In the piedmont region of North Carolina, one can expect blooms as early as late January or in some cases, sooner. Crocus will be the dominant early performer and flowers are brightly colored shades of purple, yellow and white. Some are large some are small while others have two colors in one. They are not as costly as other bulbs, therefore, consider planting large masses. Another bulb that appears early are the winter aconites or *Eranthus*. Though, they cost a bit more, when happy, they will spread by seeds. Small rosette of leaves produces a buttercup-like flower. *Cyclamen coum* is another spreader by seed when happy bulb. Heart shaped leaves give rise to little, pink or white nodding flowers. (photo on right)



Spring is that season where most bulbs outshine other plants in the garden. Tulips are the queens of flowers while the daffodils with their Alice-in-Wonderland like features brighten the day. With so many varieties of spring blooming bulbs to choose, one can achieve color, texture and form. Snowdrops or snowflakes provide a delicate finish with their nodding, pure white flowers. Ornamental onions such as *Allium giganteum* provides height as well as the early blooming glads...*Gladiolus communis*. Most ornamental onions and the species glad bloom in May which makes a good bridge between spring and summer bulb season.

*Gladiolus communis* (l) &  
*Leucojum aestivalis* -summer snowflake (r)

If you think about it, there are a lot of perennials with bulbous roots, alstroemeria, canna, elephant ears and dahlias have roots with the same energy storing system. A garden full of summer flowering bulbs will always be a vibrant garden. Good drainage or not, sun or shade, no problem, there are bulbs for every condition it seems. If you are looking for something unusual but equally stunning, look at the varieties of lilies, especially the martagon and recurved forms. Flowers hang upside down while the petals curve backwards, like little umbrellas. A summer garden is a must for the, should I say it, hurricane lilies or nekked ladies. It doesn't matter what you call them, but *Lycoris* pop up in places often forgotten. You plant them one year and they flower the flowering year or 5 years later. *Lycoris radiata* however, seems to flower year after year with no problem. Another stunning and reliable performer are the oxblood lilies or *Rhodophiala*. A great southern bulb with outward facing trumpets of red or pink flowers. Standing at just 6" tall, they are perfect for smaller or rock gardens.



*Lilium henryi* -Henry's lily (l), *Lycoris radiata* -red spider lily (m) *Rhodophiala bifida* -pink oxblood lily (r)

I bet you never imagined a gladiolus flowering during the Halloween holiday. *Gladiolus dalenii* 'Halloween' (r) does just that. Reaching 3' tall, blue, narrow leaves give way to stems with orange and yellow flowers.



A few late season bulbs to offer one last hurrah before the dead of winter sets in includes another hardy cyclamen. *Cyclamen hederifolium* begins flowering in late summer and will last for about 3 months. And, don't forget to finish the growing season with fall blooming crocus and colchicums. Colchicums or fall blooming crocus (above) possess waterlily-like flowers and *Crocus sativus* (l) which produces saffron, show off their vibrant blue-purple flowers.

There you have it, a year of bulbs, and an opportunity to expand the garden with color. If you visit Brent & Becky's Bulbs website, they guide you on proper planting time. Of course, the winter and spring bulbs will be shipped and ready for planting in fall while the summer and fall bulbs will be shipped and ready for planting in spring. My suggestion is to avoid the box stores as the chilling period has been dramatically altered which may cause bulbs to rot. I know it's tempting as prices are usually minimal, but you'll get better quality with a reputable business.