



# FORCING SPRING BULBS TO BLOOM INDOORS

Early fall is the time you want to start thinking about forcing bulbs. The process of forcing takes several weeks. You need to think ahead if you want that holiday centerpiece to be ready on time. Forcing bulbs is one of the best ways to chase away those winter blahs too.

You don't need anything special, except the bulbs and a container to hold six inches of soil. The bulbs can also be planted in water using small rocks, pea gravel, marbles or anything else that will be heavy enough to hold them down. If using this method, the bulbs should be thrown out after they flower. They will have depleted all their energy growing in water.

You will need to leave space of at least one inch between each large sized bulb, such as tulips and hyacinths. For smaller bulbs, like crocus and muscari, you can bunch them together.

To start the process of forcing bulbs you will have to plant up your selection of bulbs, water them and put them in cool to cold temperatures, along with fairly dark conditions. You are trying to mimic nature. Place the pots in a cellar, an unheated garage or any area that has a temperature of 35-40 degrees. Do not let containers with water only freeze. Place a dark plastic bag over the pot to keep them dark. The soil should be kept slightly moist through this period also.

All spring bulbs can be forced but each kind of bulb requires different cooling periods. Here are some specifics for some of the most popular:

Crocus- 8 weeks

Daffodil- 8-12 weeks

Hyacinth- 7 weeks

Tulips- 12-14 weeks

Paperwhites- 2-3 weeks. Although these do not need to be put in a cool location, doing so will produce stronger, more compact plants.

Once the cooling period is over, place your container in a sunny window. Turn them daily. Once you see the new shoots emerge, give them plenty of sunshine and water once a week.

When the bloom starts to unfold, move your container out of the direct sun to prolong the bloom. Cooler temperatures (65-70 degrees) will also insure a longer bloom time.

