

GROWING SUMMER FLOWERING BULBS

Summer or tender flowering bulbs are a group of plants often overlooked by Michigan gardeners. This group of plants will not tolerate cold temperatures and must be planted outdoors after the last frost and dug up again before the first killing frost in autumn.

Tender bulbs may be divided into categories: Those which may be planted directly outdoors and those that are best started indoors.

Plant cannas, dahlias and gladiolus directly outdoors. Cannas are tall plants with large green or bronzish foliage. They grow from 18-60" in height and produce flowers in late summer. They are very showy planted among shrubs.

Dahlias are available in most colors and sizes ranging from 12-36" in height.

Flower shapes vary, including single petaled and semi-double. Dahlias are easily grown from seed that will produce tubers which may be saved for the next year.

Gladiolus comes in a variety of sizes and colors. They range from the 60" tall varieties to the smaller 18" versions. The major requirement for gladiolus is a growing site protected from winds which will knock the flower stalks over.

Plant cannas dahlias and gladiolus outdoors in a sunny, well drained location after the last frost; sometime in mid-May. For best results, grow bulbs near the south foundation of a house where the soil warms quickly in spring.

Tuberous begonias and caladium require a longer growing season that Michigan provides. Start these plants indoors early in spring for planting outdoors after the last frost. Tuberous begonias work well in containers as well as borders and prefer a shady site. Plants average 15" in height with many trailing varieties.

Caladiums are grown for their colorful foliage rather than flowers. Plants bear large heart shaped leaves in variations of white, green red and pink. They grow about 24" tall and do best in shade. Start these bulbs indoors 8 to 10 weeks before the last frost either in flats for later replanting in the garden or pots that can be buried directly into the soil.

The **Master Gardener Hotline** is open from April to October, Monday through Friday. Lines are available 9:00 am to noon and 1:00 pm to 4:00 pm at 888-678-3464

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