

HYACINTHS

For spring fragrance, hyacinths are unbeatable.

Many people are reluctant to grow hyacinths because of poor results in the past - usually very short stems with disappointingly small flowers. Hyacinths are bulbs that need a decent cool winter, and this is mainly where things go wrong.

Whether planted in containers or in the garden, it's easy to get great results by following some easy guidelines.

PLANTING

You can plant hyacinths from early March right through to the end of May.



Purple Sensation

In the garden, you need to plant in a well-drained area as hyacinths don't like wet feet. Raised beds give great drainage if the area is a bit too wet. Prepare your soil so it is nice and fine down to a depth of 20cm, so the bulbs can push out their roots more easily. Plant with 10-12 cm of soil over the top of the bulb. The bulbs do not need any fertiliser at planting time, everything

they need is stored in the bulb itself.

In pots, choose a good quality potting mix with some slow release fertiliser in it.

You can plant a bit shallower in pots as it leaves more room beneath the bulbs for the roots, but the pot should still have a reasonable depth as the bulbs like to put out long roots and should be covered by at least 5cm of mix.

AFTER PLANTING

In the garden, there's little more to do after planting and watering in. In early spring as the shoots emerge, fertilise with a balanced N:P:K 15:10:10 fertiliser to give the plants a boost.

With pots, there are some very important dos and don'ts after planting.

Hyacinths, like tulips and some other spring bulbs, need to have a cold period after planting so they can develop the flower bud properly before spring. Planting hyacinths in a pot in autumn and then sitting



The flower bud is clearly visible inside a hyacinth bulb before planting.

the pot in a nice sunny area is the worst thing you can do, because pots warm up rapidly in direct sunshine, even in winter.

After planting, move the pot to a cool, shady position in your garden. A few frosts on it won't be a problem.

Bring the pots out into a sunnier position from early spring, once the shoots are 5-6cm high.

Fertilise on the surface of the pot in early spring using a balanced N:P:K 15:10:10 fertiliser.

Water is important in pots, as they dry out quickly. Regular watering to keep the mix just damp is the best.

AFTER FLOWERING

To ensure good flowering next year, make sure you keep looking after the bulbs after flowering. Now is the time to fertilise them to boost growth and help them re-gain strength.



Hyacinth Delft Blue

Keep watering as well, so the leaves remain green through into early December. The longer they remain green, the more growth the bulb will make.

In pots, harvest the bulbs after the leaves have died back, and replant the following autumn in new mixture.