

# FORCING BULBS

## Hollandia Nurseries Care Sheet

### Forcing Bulbs

#### Forcing Hardy Bulbs

Forcing perennial bulbs is a longer process than forcing paperwhites, but hyacinths, crocus, and daffodils provide more color and creative choices than paperwhites. Hollandia offers one of the largest bulb selections in the state from late September through December.

#### Planting

It is best to start the planting process when the weather cools in late fall/early winter, but it can begin earlier if a refrigerator is used to chill the bulbs. Choose a pot with a drainage hole that is wider than it is tall. Put a thin layer of gravel on the bottom. Space the bulbs about an inch apart and an inch from the edge of the pot. With potting soil, bury the bulbs completely with the tips just underneath the soil surface. Water well.

#### Dormancy

Bulbs must be chilled. Place the pot in a cool, dark place (35 to 50° F.) like an unheated garage, attic, shed or cellar. A refrigerator works particularly well, if a spare one is available. For healthy root development, bulbs should not freeze. Put hay or mulch over the pot in a shed or garage to deter this from happening. Hyacinths need about a 13-week cold period; crocus take about 16 weeks, and daffodils and tulips take about 15 weeks. Check on them periodically and keep moist. By the end of the cold period, sprouts should be visible.

#### Growing

When the bulbs have sufficient roots and sprouts, place the pot for two to three weeks in a cool room with indirect light. Then move it to a sunny window, all the time maintaining an evenly moist soil that is not too dry or wet. Rotate the pot to ensure sturdy growth. Flowers should appear two to three weeks after it is brought to a sunny window.

#### Aftercare

After it blooms, maintain the plant until foliage dries and bulbs go dormant. Plant outside in mid-May. Hyacinths and crocus are the easiest hardy bulbs to force, and tulips are the hardest.

#### Forcing Paperwhites

Paperwhites are one of the best and easiest bulbs to force, providing at least three weeks of bloom and fragrance.

#### Planting With Soil:

In a container, put one-inch of well-draining potting soil over a thin layer of gravel. The container should be wider than it is deep, and twice as high as the bulbs you plant. Any pot must have a drainage hole. Space the bulbs at least a pencil-width apart, nose up, in the pot. Add additional soil around the base of the bulb until just the shoulders are visible. Water thoroughly, and then keep the soil evenly moist. Place the pot in a sunny area. Paperwhites started in November and December bloom within three to four weeks. To enjoy flowers all winter, store a bag of bulbs in a cool dark place and plant them every two weeks until February.

#### Forcing Without Soil:

Paperwhites may also be forced without soil. Fill two-thirds of a shallow bowl with pebbles. The bowl should not have drainage holes. Place the bulbs on top and fill with gravel. Add water until it just barely touches the base of the bulbs. Place in a sunny area and maintain water levels. Hollandia also carries a variety of forcing jars, which are fun to use. Most are made of clear glass to show roots growing. When using a jar, just place the bulb on top and fill with water until it just touches the base of the bulb. Place in a sunny area and maintain water levels.



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