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Spring bulbs such as these can easily be grown in pots or other containers if you don't have gardening space outside.

Spring bulbs can thrive in containers



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Question: I love tulips and daffodils and all the color they bring to springtime, but I live in an apartment with no yard, only a deck. Is it possible to plant spring bulbs in containers?

AnsWER: Absolutely! In fact, spring bulbs do much better in pots than in the ground. A container provides better drainage which is so important for the long-term life of the bulbs as well as protecting the bulbs from burrowing critters like gophers who just love to nibble on them. Plus you can move them around, placing them where you wish. Bulbs are drought-tolerant so once they are done blooming, they don't require watering during the summer.

Fall is the ideal time to plant as spring bulbs depend on a chilling period during the winter and time to develop roots before flowering in the spring.

When purchasing bulbs, select large, healthy bulbs devoid of any signs of mold or soft

spots which would indicate rot. The larger the bulb, the larger the flower. Decide on color combinations and choose early, mid and late-blooming varieties for a continuous display.

An attractive option is to mix up types of bulbs. Crocus is an early bulb that has a long bloom time. Tulips, and especially "species tulips" (shorter than the standard, taller variety,) are a great choice along with narcissus, daffodils, and dwarf iris. Allium is a good choice as well, but avoid the shorter varieties like grape hyacinth which can take over quickly.

Pack the container full of bulbs, keeping them half an inch apart so they're not touching each other and pointy side up. A good rule of thumb for depth is three times as deep as the bulb is wide. Fill the container a little more than halfway full of a good potting mix soil, place your bulbs, and cover to the correct depth. If you want a variety of bulbs, layer bulbs alternately with soil, starting with the largest bulbs and ending with the smallest, like crocus, on top. Cover it all with another inch of soil and water well. Place the container outside in a spot protected from the rain. You can add some straw or mulch to protect it as well.

Your container will do fine all winter outside, but when

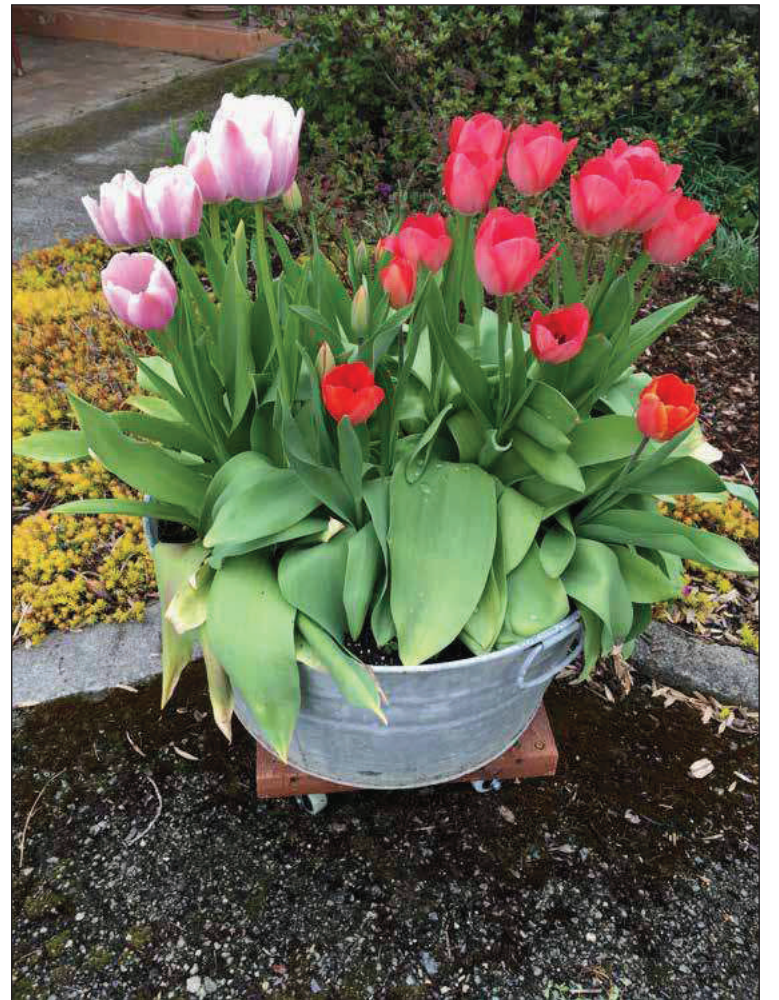


Planting spring bulbs in containers can provide apartment-dwellers with the opportunity to garden.

temperatures dip below 28 to 30 degrees overnight, it's best to bring it inside temporarily, especially smaller pots which need more cold protection. Larger pots provide more protection so can safely remain outdoors.

In the spring when the green spikes of foliage poke up through the soil, make sure the container gets plenty of sunlight and keep the soil moist. Add a slow-release fertilizer once the bulbs begin to bloom.

After the flowers are done blooming, just leave the foliage to die back. This is important to store up energy in the bulb for next year, so if you don't like the looks of drying leaves, just



A bin of tulips grows in a garden. Many flowers can thrive in a container, whether it's indoors or outside.

move the container to a spot out of sight. Once the dieback is complete you can simply leave them in the same container for next year.

Do you have a gardening question? Please email, call, or visit the Douglas County

Master Gardener Plant Clinic at douglasmg@oregonstate.edu, 541-672-4461, or 1134 S.E. Douglas Ave., Roseburg. Douglas County Master Gardeners are trained volunteers who help the OSU Extension Service serve the people of Douglas County.