

Fall additions will result in bright spring dividends



Carla Keast

AROUND THE YARD

It may seem odd to be thinking about spring flowers now, particularly this year, when it seems possible that summer will never end.

Come next spring, though, after months of winter's white followed up by weeks of spring's grey grit, a burst of vibrant yellow, red, or purple will be more than welcome. Daffodils, tulips, crocus — when it comes to spring flowering bulbs, more is more.

Unlike most garden planning, which should be done with some degree of thought and restraint, springtime bulbs should be planted freely and excessively. They will be long gone before most flowers and shrubs begin their growing season so there's no need to co-ordinate spring bulb planting with the rest of your

garden. Plant them where you'll most enjoy seeing them.

When selecting bulbs, and now is the time, the bigger the bulb, the bigger the flower.

Planting should be done when the soil is below 15 degrees. Aim for a few weeks before the frost.

Spring flowering bulbs are low maintenance. In fact, leaving them alone after they've finished flowering will be the bigger challenge. Let the leaves slowly die off until they break off with a gentle pull. Next spring's floral display depends on this. When flower production falls off, they'll need to be replaced.

Tulips and crocus like full sun. Most others like full or partial sun. With no leaves shading the ground, and the sun at a lower angle in the sky, there are all lots of potential locations.

All require well-drained soil, and it's worth spreading a five-centimetre thick layer of peat moss over your planting area and digging it in during planting.

Generally, plant them to a depth of

about three times the bulb's height, plus a bit more for hardiness zone three insurance.

If you love tulips, plant lots of them. There are early, mid, and late flowering varieties. Planting a few of each will ensure a floral display for a few weeks.

Or mix up your springtime flowers by planting in layers. Dig one hole to the depth required for the larger bulbs; allium. Put a few in, cover them with soil to the depth required for middle-sized bulbs; tulips and daffodils. Put in these bulbs, and add more soil to the depth required for the smaller bulbs; crocus, scilla, and grape hyacinth.

Plant lots, and put them close together. For springtime bulbs, more is definitely more.

Carla Keast has a master's degree in landscape architecture and is a Winnipeg-based freelance landscape designer. She can be reached at contact@carlakeast.com.



Submitted photo

Tulips are a low-maintenance addition to most yards and are a colourful signal that summer is right around the corner.