

# Launch into spring gardening



**Carla Keast**

## AROUND THE YARD

Spring growth is a tricky business for plants in this city.

The perennials are trying to work their way up through patchy, partially frozen ground; the annuals are scratching around for consistently warm soil; and the flowering trees and shrubs are calculating the odds of a late spring blizzard, while those submersed in flood waters are stoically waiting it out.

When it finally arrives, our Prairie spring delivers — it's the pre-spring that needs some help. Tough seasons call for tough plants, and spreading junipers and bulbs fit the bill. Both are dependable and low maintenance, and when planted together, launch your yard into spring.

Junipers love full sun, but many will do just fine in partial sun. They don't like wet conditions and once established, are quite

drought tolerant. They can be planted almost anytime. Wear thick gloves and long sleeves. Junipers bite!

Spreading junipers usually spend the winter under snow cover so they emerge grit-free and ready to provide instant colour. A few grouped together create a good swath of green at ground level. Extend the planting by adding bulbs to the grouping and together, they'll give you a colourful pre-spring display.

There are several kinds of bulbs. Tulips and daffodils work best with junipers. Tulips like full sun; daffodils will grow well in full sun and dappled shade. Both need good drainage. The sun/shade patterns in early spring are different than those of mid-summer, so take notes now.

Once established, most bulbs will naturalize and flower every spring. Select ones that are rated for hardiness zone three. Bulbs should be planted by early September, and it's a bit of work. I find that digging troughs or wide holes that will hold several properly-spaced bulbs is the fastest way to get the job done. Follow the spacing and planting depth indicated



*File photo*

**Junipers and daffodils are an attractive combination.**

on the bulb packaging.

After flowering, spring bulbs will drop their petals but retain their leaves. Resist the temptation to cut the leaves back. Next spring's floral display depends on the leaves being able to die back on their own. Pairing the bulbs up with some mid-height growing perennials or small shrubs will hide the withering leaves. Bleeding hearts, iris, peony, lady's mantle, shrub roses, and smaller spireas are all good choices.

A planting of spreading junipers and vibrantly coloured bulbs will guide your yard through pre-spring with ease and colour!

*Carla Keast has a Master of Landscape Architecture and is a Winnipeg based freelance landscape designer. She can be reached at [contact@carlakeast.com](mailto:contact@carlakeast.com).*

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