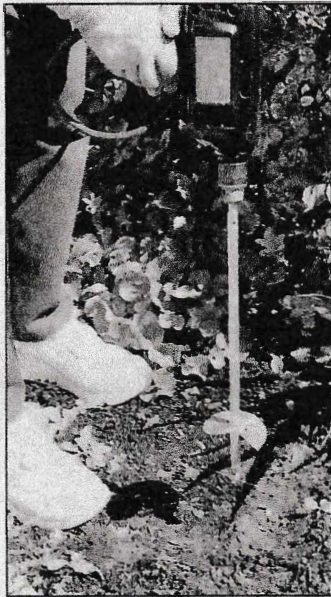


GET GROWING

Plan — and plant — now for a glorious garden in spring



A bulb auger allows you to prepare a hole for spring bulbs without disturbing nearby plants.

Two tools are of special interest to gardeners eager to get bulbs in the ground with ease

Spring is such an inspirational time of year, but in order to reap the glorious benefits of the season, the spadework must be done in the fall.

Now is the time to purchase or order your bulbs from a catalog. By planting now the bulbs will have a chance to develop the necessary roots before the cold weather sets in, and you will find it more pleasant to work in the garden.

When it comes to planting single bulbs, a long-handled bulb-planter called

“Hound Dog” is a wonderful tool to have. This handy item helps you to effortlessly plant your bulbs while standing, so you never have to bend over. Similar to a shovel, by using the molded, one-piece model you can remove a 3-inch cylinder of soil simply by pressing down on the footrest; your body weight does the work.

An alternative planter is the bulb auger, which lets you prepare a hole for your spring bulb without disturbing nearby plants. Simply insert the bulb auger into an $\frac{3}{8}$ - or $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch electric or cordless drill and tighten the drill chuck. Grasp the drill firmly with both hands and push down lightly into the soil. This should loosen



STATEN ISLAND ADVANCE PHOTOS/FRANK J. JOHNS

With the "Hound Dog" bulb-planter, you never have to bend over to plant your bulbs.

the soil to a depth of up to 8 inches. (The recommended depth for planting any bulb is three times its diameter.) Next, carefully place the bulb in the hole with the tip facing up; replace the soil and water thoroughly.

For mass planting of bulbs, place a piece of card-

board or a plastic sheet next to your planting area and dig a trench. Place the removed soil on the cardboard, sprinkle a little bulb food in the hole and mix it with the soil so the bulb does not come in direct contact with the fertilizer. Place the bulbs close together, but not touching.

DAFFODILS

Daffodils (botanically known as *Narcissus*) are beautiful, hardy and sturdy. They are the perfect plants for lazy gardeners, since when planted in well-drained soil with a half day of sun, they will bloom abundantly and reward you by multiplying. To test for drainage of your soil cut off the top and bottom of a 46-ounce juice can and place on the bottom of a 4-inch hole. Fill the can with water; if the water level drops 2 inches in one hour you have normal drainage.

"Dutch Master" is now considered to be the best all-around daffodil you can buy.

For fragrance, look for "Sir Winston Churchill," a good grower and winner of the Royal Horticultural Society's Award of Garden Merit in 2005. If you're looking for showy flowers you may be interested in "Fortissimo," with its soft yellow petals and a dark orange cup. "Thalia," an heirloom variety that produces 2 to 3 pure white flowers per stem, blooms in midseason and will enhance any planting. All are available from White Flower Farm in Litchfield, Conn. (1-800-503-9624, or whiteflowerfarm.com.)

In the spring, you can remove the seedpod after the flower has died, but allow the foliage to mature for 6 to 8 weeks after bloom. This is necessary to rebuild the bulb after flowering for the next year's flower. Do not braid, band, or tie the foliage.

Daffodils do especially well in combination with daylilies. Planted in close quarters they create a garden with two seasons of bloom - the first in spring, and the second in summer. For partial shade, hostas are a good companion plant, since, the hosta leaves will appear as the daffodil foliage is maturing. Planted in full sun or partial shade these long-lived perennials require little care and reward you with years of enjoyment.