

Gardening keeps you close to nature. Gardeners become partners with Mother Nature as she steadfastly moves through the seasons of the year. Working with her on these cool September mornings, you can't help but detect the subtle shift in the slant of the sunlight, the slow departure of summer's haze from the sky, and the gradual drain of green from leaves that will soon display dazzling fall colors.

W.E. Johns says, "One of the most delightful things about a garden is the anticipation it provides." Anticipating the crisp frosts of the fall garden full of spinach, cabbage, and collards leads to thoughts of the winter garden sleeping under the crunch of ice and snow which flows into the anticipation of spring bulbs pushing through the soil to herald in the return of glorious spring!

But every gardener knows that if you want delightful spring bulbs to pull you from the winter doldrums, you must order and plant them in the fall!! That's what we're going to talk about today...

Daffodils are a favorite spring bulb. Their sunny blooms come in a variety of colors and shapes. Once planted, daffodils should return each year and multiply in number, but only if you plant the varieties suited for the southern garden. Ice Follies, Fortune, Carlton, and Gigantic Star are good big-flowered varieties. Small-flowered varieties Trevithian, Peeping Tom, and Professor Einstein are also good choices. Daffodils are also deer resistant. Order your daffodils now for planting in October and November.

Tulips and hyacinths are bulbs that must be refrigerated for at least 6 – 8 weeks before planting. Store these bulbs in the vegetable bin of your refrigerator by the end of October and they will be ready to plant in late December or early January.

Daffodils and tulips are considered major bulbs, but there are many minor bulbs that can add color and variety to your spring and summer garden. Carolyn Sutton gave an informative presentation to the North Central Louisiana Master Gardeners on these less known gems of the gardening world. She recommended the following:

Blue star/Spring star (*Ipheion uniflorum*) - grass like foliage with blue flowers; can be planted in grassy areas because it can be mowed through the summer

Spanish bluebells (*Hyacinthoides hispanica*) - another blue for the garden; tolerates shade

Anemones – excellent cut flower, Mr. Fokker (blue), Bride (white) recommended

Byzantine gladioli (*gladiolus byzantinus*) – stunning magenta color

Ranunculus – variety of warm colors; orange, yellow, red

Magic Lily (Lycoris squamigeria) – pale pink, blooms in July; aka naked lady or resurrection lily

Snowflake (Leucojuna vernum) – little white bells on dark green foliage, likes wet soil

Allium (Allium ampeloprasum) – same family as garlic and onions, big purple balls on top of tall stems, deer resistant

There are many good online sources for ordering bulbs such as:

Brent and Becky's Bulbs www.brentandbeckysbulbs.com

McClure and Zimmerman www.mzbulb.com

Old House Garden www.oldhousegardens.com

Southern Bulb Company www.southernbulbs.com

Terra Ceia Farms www.terraceirafarms.com

Most bulbs require a sunny location with well drained soil. Bulbs make a great showing when planted in pots, too. A rule of thumb is to plant bulbs at a depth that is three times the width of the bulb.

So spring really is “in the air” when you anticipate the enjoyment of spring bulbs planted in the fall!

For pictures of the bulbs mentioned in this article go to www.growingbranchesq.blogspot.com or visit North Central Louisiana Master Gardeners on Facebook.