



Winter Care of Tender Bulbs

Contact: Diane Relf, Extension Specialist, Environmental Horticulture

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Tender, summer-flowering bulbs will profit from attention as the weather turns colder.

Steps To Save Different Bulbs

To prepare caladiums for storage, start reducing the water to the plants when the leaves begin to droop in the fall. Before the first frost, when the leaves are dry and easily removed, dig the tubers. Save the larger, vigorous tubers, spread in a shallow tray, and store in a dry warm place at about 70F. If grown in a container, store without removing them from the pot.

Tuberous begonias also need to be stored before the first frost. Reduce water when the foliage begins to turn yellow in the fall and stop all water after the foliage dies down completely. Gently remove the main stem. If difficult, leave it a few more days. When the tuber is completely dry and dormant, dig it carefully to avoid injury (remove container grown tubers from the soil also). Dry the tubers by spreading them out in flats and placing them in the sun or in a dry, well ventilated site. After about two weeks, all excess moisture will have evaporated from the tubers. Store in a single layer in trays in a cool, dry place at around 45F to 50F.

Dahlias Extremely Sensitive

Dahlias tops are extremely sensitive to cold and will be frozen and blackened by the first hard frost. After this happens, cut the stalk to within 6 inches of the ground and allow the plants to remain for a week to ten days to cure and become dormant. A mulch will protect the tubers for overwintering in most of the state but in areas of deep cold, dig the tuberous roots with a garden fork. Allow the roots to sit in the sunlight for several hours to dry. Store dry at between 40 and 45F. with a covering of dry vermiculite or peat moss to prevent the loss of additional moisture and damage to the roots from excess drying.

Common gladiolus left in the ground over winter will benefit from several inches of organic mulch to prevent freezing and thawing which can heave them from the ground. If the corms are particularly valuable, prepare them for winter storage by cutting the leaf stalks to about 2 inches above the ground as soon as the foliage turns yellow. Lift the corms with a spading fork and cure by spreading the corms in a tray and placing in a dry, airy site for several weeks. After they are dry, remove the roots and the remains of the old corms from the previous season's planting and spread on a shallow tray. Store between 40F and 45F. with a relative humidity of 80 percent.

Cannas Not Hardy in Colder Areas

Cannas are native to tropical America and are not reliably hardy in the colder areas of the state. If you do not wish to take a chance on the plants surviving in the garden, storage is not too demanding. After frost blackens the foliage, remove it to within 6 inches of the ground, dig, and allow to dry with some soil adhering to the rhizomes. Store upside down in a cool, frost-free location. Next spring divide before replanting.

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