

TOM'S GARDEN

BLOG OCTOBER 2022

Garlic

October is the time to plant garlic (and other bulbs.) If you are using your own bulbs from the previous year, choose the largest and best-looking bulbs to plant in your garden and use the rest in the kitchen. When purchasing new bulbs from a nursery source, plant them all. They are rather expensive, but disease-free and worth the cost, especially if you desire a certain type. Remember, you can replant them year after year.

Garlic bulbs purchased in grocery stores are treated to prevent them from sprouting, although you can get them to grow eventually. These bulbs are usually from China. Another source for garlic is your local farmer's market where you are assured that it is grown locally.

Other bulbs that flower in spring such as tulips and daffodils must be planted in fall. These should be ideally planted when the soil has cooled to about 55 degrees. Bulbs need cool soil to make roots before winter. You have about 8 weeks to plant after first frost. If the ground isn't frozen, you can plant bulbs.



Most tulips flower best the first spring after planting. Then, in following years, flowering is reduced and eventually stops. If you want a great tulip display every spring, you have to dig up and discard tulip bulbs after they bloom and plant new bulbs in fall. That is what arboretums and garden contractors do.

Why Won't They Come Back?

They were raised in sandy Dutch soil and fertilized just right. When they bloomed in spring the flowers were cut off to keep them from drawing energy from the bulb. The leaves were allowed to grow for another 6 weeks in the cool Dutch weather. After going dormant they are dug up and placed in a climate-controlled warehouse to mimic a long hot, bone dry summer in the mountains of Central Asia, where they are native. Our soil conditions are nothing like that here in North America and we let them flower freely. After all, isn't that their purpose?

The USDA bulb planting map shows the ideal planting time for the U.S.

Deer are a fact of life for most gardeners, even in the city. You can install a fence, spray repellents and have a dog guard your property. The motion detector water spray works for some people. Be sure to use deterrents early in the season. Once deer find your plants, it will be a hard habit to break. If deer are a big problem, use plants that deer don't like. Plants with a strong odor and leaves that are fuzzy are avoided by deer. Most herbs are resistant to grazing by deer families.

Following is a list of some deer proof garden plants. Be aware that if deer are hungry enough they will eat almost anything.

- *Yarrow
- *Coreopsis
- *Lupine
- *Tansy
- *Sage
- *Zinnia
- *Cosmos
- *Poppy
- *Sweet alyssum
- *Foxglove
- *Marigolds

Deer absolutely love hostas, tulips and day lillies.

Plant bulbs that are deer-proof. Daffodils, snowflakes and snowdrops contain a bitter alkaloid that is toxic to mammals. No animal will touch these plants no matter how hungry they are. A family of deer will eat all of new daylily foliage and leave daffodills alone. Deer resistant bulbs will only be eaten if deer are hungry enough or are on their grazing path to other snacks. Deer would rather not eat alliums, irises or fritillaries like snakes head.



Snakes head fritillary

How to Grow Venus Flytrap

I have killed several of these plants, so I decided to learn how to grow them.

The Venus flytrap (*Dionaea muscipula*) is one of the most unusual houseplants. It catches and digests flies and other insects. It's fun for children and adults to watch. The trap is a modified leaf and a plant can have as many as eight of them at one time. The leaf/trap is made up of two lobes that are joined by a hinge. Nectar inside the trap is the bait that attracts an insect inside. Once inside, the insect makes contact with one of the trigger hairs and that closes the trap. The insect is digested within 4 to 10 days, depending on size. After that the jaws re-open.

Caring for this plant requires feeding it live flies, gnats or other bugs. When in the house, you can feed it by inserting insects with a pair of tweezers until it contacts the trigger hair inside the trap. Outdoors in summer it will attract its own prey. Keep a journal because a Venus flytrap has a set number of times during its life that it can open and close. It only closes 4 or 5 times before drying out and dying. A south-facing window is ideal where the plant can get at least 4 hours of direct sun. Remove the flower when it blooms in May or June. Flowering will take away energy from the plant.

Wild Venus flytraps are native to North America. They are found in bogs in North and South Carolina with wet, acidic, nutrient-poor soil.

It's a good idea to repot a venus flytrap as soon as it is purchased to insure that any impurities from the water in the nursery are not in the soil. Venus flytraps are very picky about their growing medium. Using standard potting soil or nutrient enhanced mixtures will burn the venus flytraps and kill them quickly. When repotting use a carnivorous plant soil mixture or make your own by combining 1 part peat moss with 1 part perlite. Use rain water or distilled water and keep the soil moist. You can keep the plant in a tray of water. Do not fertilize, it likes poor soil! Root systems grow deep so choose a pot at least 4 inches deep so the roots can develop and the rhizome can stay above the majority of the water. Plastic pots are best for venus flytraps.

To repot, gently grab the root ball to avoid closing the traps. Break away the old potting medium from the roots. If necessary, separate multiple plants from each other and re-plant separately. Place the plant in the new moistened potting mixture and fill in around the roots. Water thoroughly.

The easiest way to create more plants is by propagation. A mature plant will send up offshoots in early spring. Remove them with a sharp knife being sure to include some roots. Plant the offshoots in fresh growing medium, water well and keep the soil evenly moist at all times. Place in indirect light until new roots develop.

Venus Flytrap: Perennial plant, 6-12 inches tall, 6-9 inches wide. Full to part sun. Soil sandy, moist, PH acidic. Native to North and South Carolina.

Mulch or Compost Your Leaves This Year-Don't Send Them to the Landfill
Leaves make a rich organic compost. They contain 50 to 80 percent of the nutrients that their trees extracted from the earth this past season. Earthworms will feast on this debris, burrow deeper into the soil and deposit castings which add nutrients, oxygen and drainage to the garden. No matter what condition your soil is in, leaf compost will help make loose soil retain moisture and compacted soil drain better. Rather than being seen as unnecessary trash, leaves, grass clippings and other trimmings should be going into our gardens to enrich the soil and reduce the need for fertilizers and other chemicals. You are also not sending things that are useful to the landfill.

One touch of nature makes the whole world kin

William Shakespeare