

“Plant Now for Summer Bulbs”

Caroline McNulty

10-20-2010

It's not too late to plant two of my favorite summer blooming bulbs, lilies and allium. Liliaceae (lily) are a genus of 100 or more species. They are among the oldest flowers in cultivation. Hybrids are divided into various groups based on flower form, such as Asiatic, Trumpet, Turks Cap (Martagon), Tiger, Oriental, etc. They require:

- Very well drained, humus rich soil worked to at least 10-12 inches
- Their feet in the shade and heads in the sun
- 10-10-10 fertilizer when planting, as soon as they emerge and repeat in 6-8 weeks
- Planting depth equal to three times the height of the bulb
- Sun to part sun

Choose several different varieties to stagger their bloom time. It can vary from June through late summer. Some are fragrant and they make wonderful long lasting cut flowers. When cutting, take only one third of the stem.

Allium (flowering garlic, onions) are a genus of 500-700 species in North America. Flowers are individually small but numerous, forming an attractive umbel. They require:

- Well drained, humus rich soil
- Can handle either slightly acidic or slightly alkaline soils
- Fertilize when planting in the fall
- Moisture in the summer
- Sun

Allium giganteum is one of the most spectacular ones. Stems can be 4 feet tall. Flower heads are very large, usually deep purple. They resemble a burst of color reminiscent of fireworks. Flower heads are often used in dried arrangements. Plant these in threes, fives, sevens, or more. Another personal favorite is *Allium sphaerocephalum* (“drumstick” allium). Stems can be up to 3 feet tall with dark reddish-purple flowers. The heads are oval. Plant these twelve or more for the best effect.

Varieties that form nice clumps are *A.caeruleum*, flax blue and growing one to two feet tall. Another is *A.tanguticum*, lavender-blue and also growing one to two feet. Alliums emerge in late spring but may not bloom until summer. Blooms can last two weeks or more. Best of all they are pest resistant to and deer don't eat them!

Tag line (if there's room) – *Want to be a master gardener? Class starts in January. Call Kathy at 360-301-4938 for details!*