



Patty's Plants Newsletter

Time to Dig up Your Tender plants and Bulbs

Fall is the time to start digging up your tender bulbs, corms and tubers if you want to save them.

You should wait until your area has had its first frost to dig them up. I always find it easier to do this after the foliage has died back. for most of your bulb and tuber plants. With corms like gladioli, I cut the tops off flush with the corms. The dahlia, cannas and tuberous begonia root clumps should be dug carefully with a spading fork if you have one. Then shake as much soil off as you can. You might have to let it dry first if the soil was wet. Then cut any remaining leafy growth off.

To prepare the bulbs and corms for winter storage you need to cure them.

They should be spread in a dry place for 2-3 weeks to cure. Curing means, you need to let them dry so they don't go into storage moist and then have them rot. After curing, break off the old shriveled dead looking corms and roots. Before storing, put the corms in a paper bag with a bulb dust and shake well to control insect and diseases. An onion bag or old nylon can also be used to store them in. 40-50*

Other tender roots are stored in mediums such as peat moss.

The dahlias, cannas and tuberous begonia roots should be dried well but not to the point of shriveling. After curing place them in a large a large box or container with vermiculite, peat moss or sand. Store in the coolest frost free place in your home (40-50 degrees is ideal). Most of us don't have root cellars any more so we may not have an ideal spot for them. Try it the first year and see if it's worth your time to do this. When you do store them, check them occasionally to make sure that they aren't getting moldy from being too wet or shriveling from being to dry. **Don't divide until next spring, new cuts could rot an area over winter.** Calla lilies can continue blooming for as long as 6-8 weeks. The tubers should be dug up and stored in a cool, dry place for the winter. The minimum storage time is 10 weeks, although they can be stored for as long 8-10 months. If you planted your calls in a container, keep them in it. You must keep them on the dry side until you are ready to bring them out again in the spring.



Gardening in the Midwest

Planting Hardy Bulbs for a Beautiful Spring

The first thing you must do before planting time starts, is to purchase bulbs that look healthy. They should be firm, not at all soft. You must also make sure the bulbs are hardy for your area. Then gather the supplies you need like a trowel, bulb planter, bulb food etc. After you have everything you need, you can start preparing the area you have chosen for your spring flower garden. Make sure your area has good drainage. You can test a spot by digging a hole and pouring water into it. If the water drains well, it will be a good spot. You can fix your heavy soil by adding compost or a soil conditioner to the area. When your soil is ready there are a couple of options on planting. I like to plant in clusters or in large groups. The other option is planting individually around your other perennials. Follow the planting instructions for the correct depth of type of bulb you are planting. See how to plant in the back of this newsletter.

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For more tips on Gardening in Wisconsin go to:
www.pattysplants.com or

Email: patty@pattysplants.com

Most asked Questions on How to Overwinter your Geraniums

Is there a special way to keep your geraniums over winter?

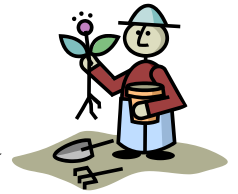
Many people try to keep their geraniums over winter with varying results. You can bring your plants indoors leaving them in their pots by pruning them back to 8-10". Or overwintering them on a bench in the basement under a light with a timer set for 8-10 hours a day. Only water when they seem really dry.

Can the geraniums be dug up and just stored in the basement?

Most people had a root cellar in their basements back in the day. My customers always said, "Their grandma used to do it". She probably had a root cellar. Now, most basements are too warm and too dry for this to work. The plants can be dug and kept in some type of container or enclosure which will keep the humidity up and hopefully keep the temperature down. But if you want to try, just shake the soil from roots & hang upside down in 40-50* area. Once a month soak the roots in water or mist 2-3 times a month.

Will geraniums over winter as house plants?

Yes, if you have a good sunny location the geraniums can be grown as houseplants for the winter. They might become leggy if they don't have enough light. You can cut them back to keep them bushier. Remember to keep them on the dry side. Geraniums do not like to be over watered.



My grandma always hung them up to dry

Hibiscus Indoors

Hibiscus can be stored in a frost free place over winter. They shouldn't go completely dormant though. You will still have to water it to keep the soil slightly moist. Also, I wouldn't cut the plant all the way back but leave most of the growth unless the plant is too big to take in. If you don't have any other choice it won't hurt to prune it a little smaller. Your plant will do much better with lots of light. I keep two of mine in a southwest and west window for the winter. The third one I put in the basement and let it go semi-dormant. It's not something I recommend as having a very good success rate. It takes a lot longer for that one to recover. But I don't have the space for all of them as I have many other favorites to bring in. On the other hand, if you leave it outside it will die for sure!

A sunny window is always best!

Saving Elephant Ears

Colocasia, Alocasia and Caladiums

These can be brought in but you will have to check them often for spidermites. They don't like dry homes and the spidermites think it's perfect for them.

Put them in a sunny spot and don't let the soil dry out. Alocasia can take a little less sun. As long as the plant continues to produce new leaves, apply a diluted liquid fertilizer (half strength). The main problem with indoors will be giving Colocasia enough humidity. You can use a humidity tray made up of pebbles with water in the pebbles then just set the plant on top. In the spring be sure to harden it off (over a week gradually expose it to direct sun and wind) before putting it on the patio or planting it in the ground after your last frost. Dig caladium tubers before your first freeze, with their foliage. Lay the plants out on old newspapers in a garage or other protected place. When the foliage is dry, remove it and store the tubers in peat moss. If you grew them in pots, you can leave them in their pots for storage. In spring, sprinkle a little compost (worm casting are my favorite) or fresh soil and timed-release fertilizer on top of the soil in the pot, and set out in the garden for summer color.



Save the Elephant and the Ears

Keeping Critters From Having Lunch In Your Garden

In the fall, you spend all day long digging and preparing your garden for what you hope will be a beautiful display of color in the spring. You find out that only half of what you planted came up. That's very disappointing to say the least.

Now, it's true weather could also be one of the culprits, but it's more likely it's those pesky furry critters. Deer, rabbits, gophers, mice, voles and squirrels just to name a few, are the ones having a gourmet meal with your newly planted bulbs. You can just hear them say, "Ahh! Smell that fresh dirt. I think someone has invited us to lunch."

Moles are sometimes blamed for most of the damage. After all they do dig the tunnels and push things around that are in their way. But really they are only looking for grubs. What is eating your bulbs from down under is most likely mice and voles. They just thank the mole for making the tunnels for them.

The best way to keep them away is to try to deter the mole so that they stop digging all those tunnels in the first place. One way to do this is to make sure your garden is free for weeds and debris. Another is to use rodent controls. There are many products out there that are safe to use around the garden.

Deer, rabbits and squirrels are the masters of the garden. They just look at you from their hiding places and laugh. They will dig up and eat almost anything that they find tasty.

Here are a few things you can try to keep them away:

1. Fencing is one solution that works but it may not be something you wish to use.
2. Using plants that deer don't like may help if you plant them around the plants they do. ([Go to list of What Deer Don't Like](#).)
3. Products, there are all kinds of smelly solutions that are natural to spray or sprinkle around the garden areas. One of my favorites is called Deer Scram. It is all natural containing things like; garlic, cloves, dried blood and more. It even works under snow for 100 days. So put it on this fall. I had a customer tell me about it first. I tried it and it worked. I didn't have to replant my lettuce or cole crops for the first time this spring. Of course, what works for one may not always work for another.
4. For squirrels, try setting up their own lunch area far away from your garden if possible. Serve them corn and peanuts.
5. Cover your bulbs with screening or chicken wire. The critter won't like digging in that. It can be disguised by using a mulch. Although you'll have to remove the screen in the spring so your bulbs can grow.
6. Try dog fur or human hair. If you don't have a dog, go to a dog groomer. They should be happy to give away fur. As well as the beauty shop giving you some fresh cut hair. These both work for awhile but the birds love it and will build their nests with it.
7. The last idea would be to plant bulbs that critters don't like. See list for : [Bulbs That Aren't Edible on the next page](#) or for "[Plants That Deer Don't Like](#)" at:
8. pattysplants.com

For more tips on gardening in Wisconsin and the Midwest go to :
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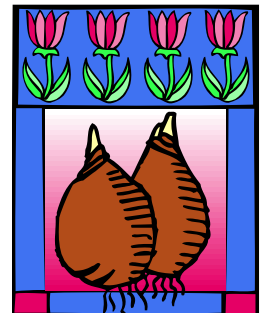
E-mail: patty@pattysplants.com



Lunch is served

How to plant your Bulbs

1. Prepare your soil– Use any kind of well composted manure, soil conditioner, home-made compost. Dig up the soil and mix in any of the above mentioned. Make a large area for mass planting or use a bulb digger for small areas
2. Place the bulbs with the pointy side up. Follow the instructions on the package for the correct planting depth.
3. Sprinkle with bonemeal or any kind of bulb food.
4. Cover bulbs with your good soil mix. Pat down but don't compact the soil.
5. Mulch your areas with shredded bark, leaves or straw to protect them when the ground starts thawing and then starts freezing again.



Non Edible Bulbs

Daffodils (Narsissus)
Hyacinths
Crocuses
Snowdrops (Galanthus)
Winter Aconite (Eranthis)
Grape hyacinths (Muscari)
Squill (Puschkinia)
Frellilara (Crown Imperials)



"I guess I'll eat this"

Coming in November newsletter:

Indoor Herb Gardening

Selecting Your Herbs

How to grow Herbs Indoors

Herbs for Cozy Cups of Tea

Herbal Thanksgiving Stuffing