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Didn't Get Your Bulbs Planted Yet?

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If you didn't get your spring-flowering bulbs planted it may not be too late, but a lot depends on what the weather does.

The reason for planting bulbs in the fall is two-fold. Bulbs require a period of chilling to initiate flowers. Most spring-flowering bulbs require 10 to 13 weeks of temperatures below 40° F.



Crocus



Tulips

Bulbs also need to put down good root growth before they sprout foliage and flowers. Soil temperatures must be above 40° F for root formation and thanks to our recent warm spell, soil temperatures are still well above that threshold.

You can look up soil temperature and other weather data on the Indiana State Climate website <https://ag.purdue.edu/indiana-state-climate/data/>. As of November 11, soil temperatures (at 4" depth) were in the upper 50's or low 60's in much of the state.

Waiting until spring to plant the bulbs will not satisfy the chilling requirements, so spring-planted bulbs will likely not bloom that first year. Spring planted bulbs also would not have a chance to root before leaves emerge.

Saving the bulbs for planting next fall is not a wise choice either. Proper storage conditions to keep the bulbs cool and dry are often hard to find. Bulbs usually begin to soften and rot or may actually sprout before they get planted. Even under ideal storage conditions, the bulbs will lose some of their food reserves through the natural plant process of respiration.

If you haven't yet planted your bulbs, the best choice is to get them in the ground as soon as possible, so that at least some chilling and rooting will take place. Apply a mulch after the ground freezes to prevent bulbs from being heaved out of the soil due to alternate freezing and thawing.

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