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How to Grow Hyacinths: The Complete Hyacinth Flower Guide



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Planting, Growing, and Caring for Hyacinths

By Catherine Boeckmann



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Ahhh! The scent of hyacinth is intoxicating in springtime! And who can resist the tiny blue Muscari? Learn more about planting these spring-flowering bulbs as well as caring for the pretty pastel flowers after they bloom.

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About Hyacinths and Grape Hyacinths

- **Hyacinths (*Hyacinthus*):** Originally a pale blue or violet flower, hyacinths now come in a rainbow of colors, including lilacs, pinks, white, cobalt blue, cream, apricot, and even a blood-

8 to 10 inches tall. The hyacinth's loose-to-dense racemes (clusters) of strongly fragrant flowers may be closely packed single or double flowers.



Close-up of Hyacinth flowers in full bloom. Credit: Elena Tratsevskaya

- **Grape hyacinths (*Muscari*)** are not directly related to true hyacinths, but also bloom in mid-spring and have the same care requirements. This tiny wonder has small clusters of bell-shaped, cobalt-blue flowers.



Blue muscari. Credit: Shebeko

Note: This page will refer to both *Hyacinthus* and *Muscari* plants as “hyacinths” for simplicity’s sake!

As hyacinths are one of the first blooms, they look best at the front of a perennial garden, near the front door, along a walkway, or in mixed borders. These beauties are also a great choice for pots and planters. Hyacinths make wonderful cutting flowers, too, and look stunning in bouquets. As the flowers are famous for their fragrance, you can bring the sweet scent of spring inside!

The Victorians revered hyacinths for their sweet, lingering fragrance, and carefully massed them in low beds, planting them in rows of one color each. In general, hyacinths are said to symbolize playfulness, sport, and rashness, though their meanings are color-dependent. [Learn more about the meanings of flowers.](#)

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Please note: Most hyacinths grow in Zones 3 to 9. They must have cold temperatures of 40° to 45°F (4° to 7°C) for at least 12 to 14 weeks. If temperatures in your area do not get this cold, you'll need to pre-chill the bulbs in a refrigerator before planting them outdoors.

Warning: Hyacinth bulbs (and daffodil bulbs) contain a substance called oxalic acid, which can be irritating to bare skin. Use gloves when handling these bulbs for extended periods.

Read Next

- [The Best Flower Bulbs to Plant in the Fall](#)
- [Growing Alliums: The Ornamental Onions](#)
- [Forcing Bulbs Indoors for Early Spring Flowers!](#)

PLANTING

Choose a planting site that gets full sun for the largest blooms and straightest stems. The bulbs are tolerant of partial shade as well.

Grow in loosened, moderately fertile soil that drains well. Avoid planting low areas where water collects; hyacinths will rot in wet soil! Before planting, loosen the soil and work in 2 to 4 inches of compost or bonemeal for fertility.

When to Plant Hyacinths

- Like other spring-blooming bulbs, plant hyacinth bulbs in mid-to-late autumn, any time after your first fall frost and before the ground freezes.

How to Plant Hyacinths

- Plant hyacinth bulbs 4 to 5 inches deep. Space bulbs 5 to 6 inches apart (grape hyacinths can be 2 inches apart). At the northern limits of their

inches deeper to ensure

winter hardiness.

- Dig out a larger area if you wish to plant five or more bulbs simultaneously. Hyacinths look beautiful in groupings of five to nine bulbs. Grape hyacinths also look best in masses and loose drifts.
- Set the bulb in the hole with the pointy end up.
- After planting and covering with soil, water thoroughly.
- Apply a 1- to 2-inch layer of mulch around the plants to discourage weeds and disease.
- If you are transplanting, water sparingly and then do not water again until flower buds appear the following year.



Forcing Hyacinth Bulbs Indoors

winter. Plant them with the tips just showing, in soil-based potting mix in containers with drainage holes.

- Keep in a dark place at temperatures above freezing but no higher than 45°F (7°C), for at least 10 weeks to allow roots to develop.
- When shoots are about 1 inch long, increase light and temperature gradually.
- Water carefully and avoid wetting the shoots or waterlogging the soil. Soil should be moist, not wet.
- After flowering, forced hyacinths may be transplanted into the garden, and they will flower again in subsequent years.

GROWING

Caring for Hyacinths

- Do NOT overwater hyacinth. They do not like standing water or having “wet feet.” Water ONLY if the soil is dry at a depth of 3 inches. If it is dry at that depth, it is time to water.

courages disease. Lay the hose end next to the plant, turn the hose on low, and water for about 30 minutes or until the soil is moist. A soaker hose turned on low for a few hours will cover a larger area effectively.

- With the organic matter and mulch, you do not need to fertilize. However, it's OK to sprinkle a commercial organic fertilizer over the soil.
- Protect container-grown plants from excessive winter moisture by covering them or moving them to a sheltered area.

Types

- ***Hyacinth orientalis ‘Blue Jacket’***: One of the great blues of the flower world. These award-winning hyacinths display big columns of royal blue florets with crisp white edges.
- ***H. orientalis ‘City of Haarlem’***: A wonderful heirloom variety that's been popular since the late 1800s. The flowers are soft, primrose yellow, maturing to creamy white.

salmon pink petals with peach and buttery-yellow highlights.

- **H. orientalis ‘Jan Bos’:** Intensely fragrant, this award-winning hyacinth has fuschia-pink florets that are tightly packed into large flowerheads.
- **H. orientalis ‘Miss Saigon’:** With a deep, rich purple color, this fragrant hyacinth is covered with starry, violet florets. Gorgeous!
- **H. orientalis ‘Pink Pearl’:** Rose-pink flower heads turn heads with their cotton-candy sweetness; ‘Pink Pearl’ is a favorite for spring containers to add a pop of color.
- **Muscaris armeniacum:** This grape hyacinth has small and delicate cobalt-blue flowers that look gorgeous when planted en masse.

HARVESTING

What to Do With Hyacinths After Flowering

Outdoors

don't remove the foliage. The bulbs need their leaves to gather energy for next year's blooms. The foliage will die back naturally at the end of the spring season. Remove when the leaves have turned brown to help prevent fungal diseases.

- Hyacinth bulbs can remain in the ground throughout the year in most planting zones. If you live a warm climate where temperatures do not get below 60°F, bulbs should be dug up in the fall and refrigerated in a cool, dry area for 6 to 8 weeks. Hyacinths require a period of colder weather to bloom.

Indoors

- Hyacinth bulbs that have finished flowering indoors can be transplanted into the garden. After flowering, they need time to gather energy for next year's blooms, so they should not be placed directly into storage.
- After their foliage dies back outdoors, hyacinth bulbs can be brought indoors

GARDENING PRODUCTS



PESTS/DISEASES

- Bulbs are prone to gray mold and **bulb rot** when kept too wet.

WIT AND WISDOM

Are Hyacinth Bulbs Poisonous to Cats and Dogs?

Yes, hyacinth bulbs are poisonous to pets.

Many spring flowers, such as hyacinths

and skin irritation. This substance—calcium oxalate—is most concentrated in the bulbs, but is also found in the foliage and flowers of the hyacinth plant. Keep hyacinths out of reach of curious pets and children, and wear gloves when handling hyacinth bulbs for long periods of time.

The one upside to the hyacinth's toxicity is that common garden pests, such as squirrels and groundhogs, often aren't as tempted to eat your hyacinth bulbs!

Will Hyacinths Bloom Again?

Yes and no. Hyacinths bloom just **once yearly** (in the spring), but they will happily **bloom again in subsequent years** if provided with the proper care. They are a perennial plant.

FLOWERS

Catherine Boeckmann



Catherine Boeckmann loves nature, stargazing, and gardening so it's not surprising that she and The Old Farmer's Almanac found each other. She leads digital content for the Almanac website, and is also a certified master gardener in the state of Indiana. [Read More from Catherine Boeckmann](#)

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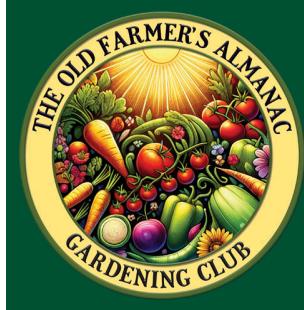
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COMMENTS

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Cheryl (not verified) 1 year ago

Can I plant the "bulbs" on the end of the stem?

Are those balls that come after the blooms die,
hyacinth bulbs?

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[REPLY](#)**The Editors** 1 year ago

Hi Cheryl, Those little “bulbs” are seed pods. They will mature into a tan color and then split open to disperse their seeds for next year! (If you do not want more hyacinth, you can cut off the seed pods that appear after the blooms fade.) Best, The Old Farmer’s Almanac gardeners

[REPLY](#)

Cheryl (not verified) 1 year 12 months ago

I gave a beautiful Hyacinth to my daughter in law for Easter. It is dying. The flowers are mostly gone and the leaves look good, other than the tips being brown. How do I bring it back to life?

[REPLY](#)

Hi, Cheryl, Hyacinths are bulbs; they flower and fade. You might bring it back if you left it dry out, and when the foliage (the green bands of leaf) dies back (dries out), cut it off and, in the fall, plant the bulb. It will need a few weeks or so of cold weather. It might bloom again next spring. (I say "might" because it was probably forced to be in bloom for Easter; you can not always be certain that it will come back ... but it might.)

If you are not in an area that has a cold winter, you could try forcing it.

Here is some advice on doing that

<https://www.almanac.com/forcing-mother-nature-forcing-bulbs>

We hope this helps!

REPLY

Greg (not verified) 2 years 2 months ago

I live just north of San Francisco. I plant hy-

three inches tall and flowers are popping open at dirt level. I keep trying with no reward. I have no problem with daffodils and tulips. Any suggestions would be appreciated.

REPLY

The Editors 2 years 2 months ago

This commonly happens with bulbs that haven't been chilled long enough. They require about 12 weeks of cold temps to get them "in the mood" for blooming properly. If you buy them from a supplier, they should already be chilled, but you could try chilling them for a few more weeks before planting them. Also make sure that you're planting at the right depth—they should sit about 4 inches deep.

REPLY

Frank (not verified) 2 years ago

I have hyacinths in the ground in NJ,

too, until this year. They were the tallest they've ever been and I wonder why this year they got so tall so I can continue it. 😊

REPLY

Dustin Hamilton (not verified) 2 years 11

months ago

I live in heber springs Arkansas , and I was given 2 hyacinth bulbs. For some reason I'm struggling inthis odd environment. You can get all seasons in a day here n I'm wondering if there is anything specific I can do?

REPLY

Kristy Bui (not verified) 2 years 3

months ago

Chill the bulbs in the 1st of August in a paper bag. Plant them in Thanksgiving.

After the blooms are finished, cut off the spent flowers, fertilizer it once

whole cycle over again.

I lived in Houston TX and I have successfully grown spring bulbs for years except tulips.

REPLY

Mary Ann Kelly (not verified) 2 years 11

months ago

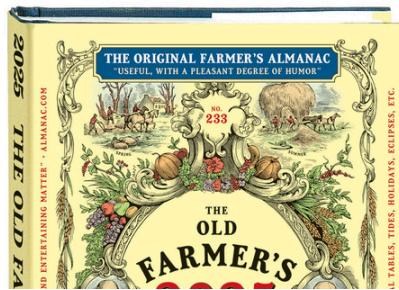
What are the many round balls on some of the extensions of the hyacins after it has bloomed?

What do I do with them?

REPLY

MORE COMMENTS

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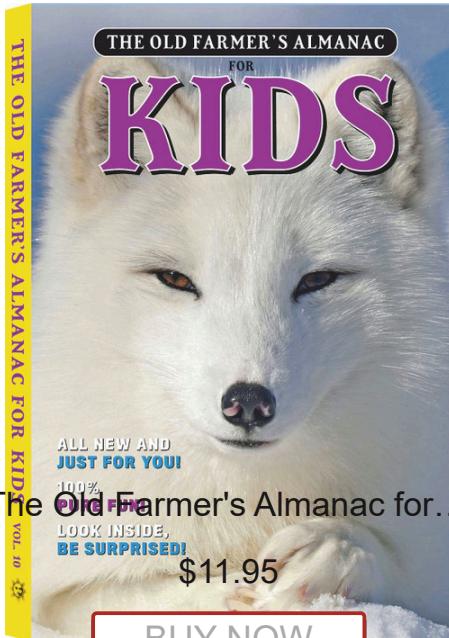
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