



PHOTO COURTESY OF RED BUTTE GARDEN

SPRING *FLING*

Blooming bulbs blanket Red Butte Garden's hillsides with a springtime spectacle, inspiring many to plan and plant one of their own.

BY DON SKYPECK

If, as Ralph Waldo Emerson said, "The earth laughs in flowers," then spring currently has the grounds at Red Butte Garden in stitches. Every year from mid-March through early May, the Garden presents a riotous display of over 500,000 springtime blooming bulbs, more than half of which are daffodils (*Narcissus*). Most of the 239,000 daffodils peak in April, blanketing the hillsides in their sunny hues. The Garden is home to over 160 cultivars and species of daffodils and is recognized as an official Daffodil Display Garden by the American Daffodil Society.

Other blooming bulbs in the Garden include *Iris reticulata*, *Hyacinthus*, *Anemone*, *Allium*, *Eremurus*, *Fritillaria* and many more. "Spring-blooming bulbs are a great asset to any garden design," says Crystal Kim, garden horticulturist for Red Butte Garden. "They are a colorful and joyful reminder that winter is fading and spring is almost here." Kim explains that spring bulbs are best planted in the fall to al-



1 2
3 4

1. Narcissus 'Pineapple Prince' 2. Narcissus 'Ice Follies' 3. Narcissus 'Minnow' 4. Narcissus 'Itzim'

PHOTOS BY JASON BAKER, RED BUTTE GARDEN HORTICULTURIST

low for vernalization, meaning exposure to a period of cold. This is essential for spring blooming. Fall planting, however, benefits from spring planning.

“Before you begin planting bulbs next fall, take a look at your garden and decide what you wish to achieve,” Kim suggests. How will the blooms relate to the existing plants in your garden? What kind of soil, drainage and sun exposure do you have? Bloom time may be the most important consideration. Kim explains blooming bulbs are divided into several seasons of bloom, from very early spring through late spring, summer and even fall. By using a combination of bulbs with different flowering times, colors and sizes, it’s possible to create a beautiful display of blooms that lasts from late winter through late fall.

For those who particularly delight in

daffodils, our climate offers ideal growing conditions. “Daffodils are great garden perennials,” Kim says. “They are drought-tolerant and virtually pest-free.” Daffodils require water in the spring while blooming and growing, which is usually satisfied by our typical spring rainfall. Because these bulbs go dormant during summer, they easily tolerate the season’s hot, dry weather. What’s more, Kim explains, daffodils are very cold hardy and actually require a certain amount of cold temperatures to stimulate root and flower development. “If planted correctly, they will multiply and live happily in your garden for many years,” she says. As proven by Red Butte Garden’s bloom-covered grounds, daffodils may be the most surefire way to deliver springtime smiles and laughter to any landscape, perhaps even yours. ■



DIG IN Crystal Kim’s Daffodil planting tips

- Select bulbs that are firm and free of white mold (some blue-gray mold is okay and does not affect growth). Discard any soft, moldy bulbs.
- Plant bulbs in the fall when the soil temperature has cooled below 54°F but hasn’t frozen yet. Along the Wasatch Front, bulbs can be planted through October and even into November, depending on weather.
- Locate daffodils in any deep, well-drained soil in full sun. Planting beneath deciduous trees is okay if the trees leaf out after the bulbs have finished for spring and if tree roots don’t interfere with planting.
- Plant daffodil bulbs at a depth two to three times the diameter of the bulb, which is usually about 6-8 inches deep. Space bulbs about three times the width of the bulb apart so that they have plenty of room to get established and multiply.
- Position the bulbs pointed side up. The top of the bulb, from which the shoot emerges, is more narrow and pointed than the base. The base is rounded, with some of the previous year’s dried, hair-like roots attached to its somewhat flattened bottom.
- Fertilize only if you have very poor soil. If you do use fertilizer, mix it into the soil at the bottom of the hole before planting the bulbs.
- If planting during a dry autumn, make sure to irrigate your bulbs well, since roots start growing in fall. The cool weather of the fall season is great for growing roots.

Visit redbuttegarden.org for more on spring bulbs and events calendar.