



# "First Feast"

## Feeding Pollinators with Spring-Flowering Bulbs

### Supporting Information:

#### Bulbs that Feed Pollinators, are Deer/Critter Resistant and Thrive Here in USDA Zone 5b

- While there are thousands of spring-flowering bulbs, not all provide nectar & pollen.
- We are looking at eight types of bulbs that span our USDA 5b growing season from March to July AND tend to naturalize or spread.
- These eight types are also less appealing to deer and squirrels.
- In particular, we're emphasizing the early season bulbs that provide nectar & pollen to bumblebees as they emerge from hibernation.

#### Order of Bloom from March through July

##### EARLY BLOOMERS - Most Important for Bumblebees:

- Crocus - many species (technically a corm, not bulb)
- Scilla - many species - Siberian Squill
- Chionodoxia - several species - Glory-of-the-Snow
- Galanthus - several species - Snowdrop
- Eranthis hyemalis - Winter Aconite
- Muscari - several species - Grape Hyacinths

##### MID-SEASON - secondarily early season helpful for native and honeybees:

- Narcissus - all small-cupped daffodils
- Species Tulips - unhybridized, will spread

##### LATE SEASON - late sources of pollen & nectar for all pollinators and just plain fun!

Alliums - Ornamental Onions - so many fabulous species that bloom during the summer to fall.

### Considerations

#### PLANTING

- Plant the bulb tip up or flat side down.
- Common practice is to plant each bulb 2-3 x the height of the bulb.
- Plant after the soil has begun to cool.
- Mulch with 2-3" of **shredded** leaves.
- Make sure to water/soak the entire area well after planting!

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## ARRANGEMENT

- Check each species for recommended spacing of bulbs.
- Check each species for moist or well-drained, full or part sun recommendations.
- For best effect, plant in groupings of five to nine bulbs; separate groupings.
- Mix or "layer" different types of bulbs in an appropriate area to sequence blooms through the season.
- Consider contrasting or complementary color combinations with perennial and annual blooming plants.

## CARE

- Cover with staked wire or plastic mesh for only the first year to prevent harvesting by squirrels.
- Fertilize in the spring with a bit of compost or 10-10-10 organic fertilizer.
- Snip off the old flowers so the plant's energy goes to the bulb for next year.
- Make sure to leave the leaves after blooming. They're needed to make energy for next year's blooms. You can mulch or compost the old leaves when they are yellow.

## Why is pollinator support important?

- Directly and indirectly, pollinators help to create the vast majority of our food. "Three-fourths of the world's flowering plants and about 35 percent of the world's food crops depend on animal pollinators to reproduce. More than 3,500 species of native bees help increase crop yields."
- Pollinators are in danger and steep decline. "The main threats facing pollinators are habitat loss, degradation and fragmentation. As native vegetation is replaced by roadways, manicured lawns, crops and non-native gardens, pollinators lose the food and nesting sites that are necessary for their survival. Migratory pollinators face special challenges. If the distance between the suitable habitat patches along their migration route is too great, smaller, weaker individuals may die during their journey."
- "Simply put (very simply), pollen contains protein, along with fat and other nutrients pollinators need while nectar contains sugars, vitamins, salts, oils, and additional nutrients that together offer a high energy food source for pollinators."

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