



Forcing Spring Bulbs.

We are so close to spring in the Northwest, so close I can feel it! Spring is my favorite time of year and I can't help but anticipate the sunny warm days to come. I always tell folks I love living where there are four seasons because with each new season comes new activities. Whether it be down-hill skiing, cooking stews, planting a garden or playing in the creek, seasons give us the chance to do wonderful stuff.

I truly love what each season brings, but I have a certain impatience when it comes to certain things. Like winter. Winter by far takes the greatest toll on me. Although I welcome the first snow, sledding, and holiday parties, sooner, rather than later, winter seems to lose luster. Frolicking in the snow quickly turns to drudging through slush, scraping off car windows, and trying to make it down paths without slipping and falling. For me, there are a good two months of anticipating spring and let's just say it feels like forever! To make it past these two months, I like to force bulbs in my house.

Doing this brings spring time indoors while the weather is still freezing outdoors. Something about seeing daffodils grow and flourish on my kitchen counter keeps me from scratching the heck out of my spring itch and keeps me feeling up-lifted during the last couple of months

of months of winter.

Forcing bulbs is very simple and the arrangements last for weeks. You can buy "forcing bulbs" in late winter and early spring, but they are generally over priced. Buying bulbs in the fall, when folks are planting them outdoors, is generally the cheaper option.

All you need are the bulbs, some kind of pot or vessel (tin cans, mason jars, planters, vases...), small pebbles, and water. Some of the taller flowers will need support. As they grow taller they may fall over and look more sad than cheerful. Your choice of vessel can also determine whether or not you need a support. For example, if you plant three bulbs in a 1 inch layer of pebbles placed at the bottom of a mason jar, you will have about 6 inches to the top of the jar for support. So it all depends on what flower you decide to force and what kind of vessel you chose to use.

Planting your bulbs is simple. This is what I recommend for healthy, long lasting and sturdy bulbs:

Line your vessel with at least 1-2 inches of pebbles, any amount after that is up to you.

Arrange the bulbs tightly. Packing them tightly, without smashing them, can also help the flowers stand up-right.

Add water. Pour just enough water so that the bottom of the bulbs just barely touch the water. I also like to water my bulbs with ice cubes. This mimics the spring thaw and the bulbs seem to love it.

The reason for this is you don't want the bulbs to rot. Too much water can cause mold and rot the flower. This means that you have to check and/or water these flowers a little everyday.

Evaporation and the water consumed for growth is enough to bring the water level down too much. The key is to keep your eye on them and, quite frankly, it is hard not to pay attention to these beauties.

Every bulb takes a different amount of time to grow. Generally, within a week, you should see bright green leaves emerging. Within two weeks, depending on the type of flower, you could have some flowers.

Forcing bulbs is simple, fun, beautiful and amazing to watch. I love waking up every morning and seeing