

## Have You Planted Your Bulbs?

Fall planting is elastic: fall only ends in Tidewater when it snows before Christmas. Last week my eye was caught by a large photograph of a double Hyacinth called 'Chestnut Flower' (Heirloom 1880). One has to be careful not to lose one's head over a picture when the charm may lie as much in the skill of the camera as in the bloom itself. So I checked it in Brent & Becky's Bulbs catalog. It is there, shell pink with a darker stripe and it is lovely!

In the 18<sup>th</sup> Century there were over a thousand different Hyacinth varieties under cultivation in the Netherlands, including hundreds of the lush double ones, even some with three rows of petals in each floret. The Victorian gardeners, given to massive designs featuring greater numbers of fewer colors, adapted to changing fashions and planted more single flowered forms. Fortunately, these older forms are becoming available again.

The sturdy straight up-and-down design of Hyacinths makes them less adaptable in more casual modern gardens than Daffodils, our first love, but since they have a captivating fragrance that is unequalled in spring blooms, they are regaining their popularity. Brent & Becky's catalog has a wealth of them with the information you need for choosing the best varieties for forcing inside, as well as other planting suggestions. The first rule in planting them is to put them where you catch the fragrance, in pots by your front door, for example.

Can you think of a more welcome holiday gift than a bulb nestled in its forcing vase? Gone, thankfully, is the time when color choice was limited. No matter the color, you can tie a sprig of holly around the vase's neck and it is perfect for the season.

Another irresistible one is 'Gypsy Queen' a salmon/peach/coral beauty asking to be planted near your favorite pink Daffodil. As to Daffodils, one always needs another. The catalog will give you hours of meditation time.

FROST YET? Depending upon where your garden is located you may have seen some plants turn black and collapse. It is time to pull out dead annuals and remove broken parts of perennials. It is also time to mulch those Gladiolus corms and the Dahlias if you are leaving them in the ground. If you are concerned that the Dahlias may succumb to wet feet, dig them up, dry them for a few days and put them into a paper bag. Store them in a cool dry place away from frost.

Other plants need to be kept out of the cold if you plan to cook with them. Actually many of them survive outside but are you going out on a cold dark evening to add Rosemary to the pork roast? You may have started Rosemary cuttings but if not, it is surprising how long a glassful of cutting will keep in water. Remove the leaves below the waterline and change the water frequently.

Small plants of sage, thyme, mint and others will be handy to your scissors in a southern sunny windowsill. Basil is a hot weather plant but you know that and have frozen pesto, or dried the leaves on a cookie sheet, turning the oven on to warm it but turning it off after the herbs are inside. Herb plants can be fed with fish emulsion at half-strength I am told and trimmed to keep them bushy. Most herbs dislike being drowned and most of us have a tendency to over-compensate for our prior neglect of houseplants by overwatering.

If you have not done so already, bring in the Pelargoniums (what we call geraniums- those plants of brilliant round clusters of florets and spicy leaves). Leaving them in their pots, unwatered, in the garage next to the furnace will enable you to cut them back by one-third when spring warms, put them back outside in the sun and water them. Fun to see them return!

## CABBAGES & KINGS

More good news: I have read that some species of staghorn corals can interbreed with related species thereby creating hybrids that may more easily survive climate change as well as other stresses. All over the world reefs are endangered by pollution, fishing techniques, and the acidification of ocean water so it is good to know researchers in Queensland, Australia have found promise in their studies.

## A CAUTIONARY TALE

Since trees are worth more money dead than alive it is hard to argue that deforestation should be stopped. The British government is considering giving forests credit in a carbon market. Polluters around the world could offset their carbon emissions by paying for forest preservation. It is reported that deforestation could be diminished under this kind of program.

The carbon market, so-called cap & trade plan has been operating in Europe for years and has been promised for here.