

Bulbs and perennials can "buddy up" in the garden

Fall is the traditional season for planting the colorful tulips, dahlias and other bulbs that bloom in the spring. Today, however, savvy gardeners are taking note that fall is also a perfect time to plant such perennial "buddies" as Forsythia, heuchera, cowslip, hosta, golden feverfew, Moseroti (forget-me-not), ivy, Nepeta (catmint), primroses, and others.

Used in smart combinations, inter-planted bulbs and perennials can create an especially intriguing spring border that serves as a springboard to a super summer garden.

Mix and Match

When planning the early spring garden, look to combine early-flowering bulbs with perennials that produce early foliage and/or early flowers. The early, long-flowering miniature Narcissus 'February Gold,' for example, offers glorious yellow flowers in exactly the same hue as Forsythia intermedia 'Golden Bell.' This narcissus also teams up smartly with another perennial, yellow cowslip (Primula veris). Cowslip, in turn, makes a spritely match for other narcissi such as the diminutive yellow favorite 'Minnow' and the elegant 'Louise de Coligny.'

For a sophisticated color combo, consider blue Jungwurt (Primula nana angustifolia), so named because it was once thought to have medicinal qualities related to the lungs, and the later-flowering, pale yellow 'Narcissus Jenni.' Both plants thrive in semi-shade and tolerate moisture well.

Complementary Colors

Bulbs combined with perennials in a landscape are used to complement, not dominate, the

planting. The idea is to create a rich tapestry of color, form, and texture. Avoid perennials that will spread too quickly and overpower their partners.

Whereas huge beds of tulips or hyacinths were once mainly used to cut blazing swaths of color that bloomed and then faded across the landscape, they are now often used in more subtle combinations to create evolving scenarios in the spring garden. Shape, height, color, texture, and bloom times should all be considered.

There's also a practical side to this. After the flowers of spring bulbs fade, the remaining foliage is left to wilt and die back. While necessary if the bulbs are to flower again next spring, this withering phase can be a let down in the garden.

Be Creative

Many combinations even unusual ones can be perfectly pleasing. Consider clusters of tall, nodding white Leucolum aestivum amidst the lovely leaves of Geranium 'Johnson's Blue.'

Plant the white starbursts of Tulipa turkestanica amid the red-

leaved wood spurge Euphorbia amygdaloides 'Purpurea,' groundcover plantings of smoky mauve heathers come alive in spring with surrounding sweeps of cobalt blue grape hyacinths (Muscaria amurensis).

Later in the season, brighten things up with Tulipa 'New Design' combined with brilliant blue Scilla sibirica and peachy-pink and yellow primroses. For pink-on-pink pleasure, pair button-headed, daisy-like pink Bells perennials 'Pomponette' with deep wine-colored, fringed Tulipa 'Burgundy Lace.' Or try May-flowering camassias such as 'C. leichlinii 'Alba,' which are perfect in a shady spot combined with ferns. For a spectacular summer combination, plant the great Erenurus foxtail lily with plant-buddy Alchemilla (lady's mantle).

Companionship Contained

Bulbs and perennials enjoy life together in containers too. Choose permanent residents first, perennials that will serve as foliage or flower anchors. Bold hostas, glaucous ferns, or peewee or magenta-leaved heuchera are good examples. Now add dramatic seasonal "come and go players." An especially sophisticated spring-time look pairs silver-leaved Heuchera 'Pewter Moon' with near-black Tulipa 'Queen of Night,' mauve wall flowers, and tall, willowy yellow cottage garden gems.

These are just a few suggestions there are hundreds more. For as spectacular as bulbs are when planted by themselves, the pleasure is doubled when a little perennial companionship is introduced. For more tips on gardening, be sure to visit your local garden center.

Source: Pennsylvania Landscape & Nursery Association, Harrisburg, PA. www.pina.com.



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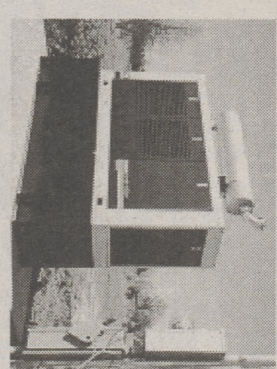


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Some things to think about when selecting a standby generator

This year, consumers are considering the purchase of a standby generator more than ever. Some homeowners have doubts that the power will stay on January 1st, 2000. Others may be business owners who have always intended to purchase auxiliary power, and Y2K concerns have helped them finalize that decision. If you are considering a backup generator purchase, there are important sizing and code requirements that you need to know to insure a safe and adequate standby generator installation. Sizing the generator takes into account the total kilowatt(kw) requirements of the electrical equipment to be served. Undersizing can leave you frustrated while oversizing is just a waste of money. Pay particular attention to anything with an elec-



tric motor. Starting a motor requires three to seven times the current used during normal operation. Allowing for this startup or inrush of current when sizing the generator is crucial. Electrical connections to the wiring system of the home, farm, or business require a double-throw transfer switch. This is not a do-it-yourself project! Involve an experienced electrical contractor to insure a safe, reliable installation that meets all local and national code requirements. Another safety consideration is where the generator is placed. Unless you vent the generator fumes to the outside, never locate it inside a building, garage or basement.

A new publication is now available that contains a wealth of information about standby generators. Called "Sizing and Selecting Your Standby Generator," this 20-page illustrated guide helps homeowners, farmers and small business owners understand a correctly sized and safely installed standby generator system. It explains the various types of generators available, such as engine or tractor driven, portable

or permanently anchored units. Three examples are provided to illustrate proper matching of the electrical capacity to the particular load requirements. One section is devoted to the need for a double-throw transfer switch. Also the names, locations, and phone numbers of 32 major generator suppliers are included to assist readers with the selection process.

To order this booklet, call the National Food and Energy Council (NFECC) at 1-573-875-7155 or fax 1-573-449-5392 mentioning "Sizing and Selecting Your Standby Generator." The price is \$6.25 plus shipping and handling. Learn more about this and other electrical topics at www.nfecc.org.

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