

Bulbs For the Prairie Garden

by Elaine Rude

Paintbrush Garden Design and Consulting
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Hardy Bulbs Spring bloomers

- Allium sp.- *alliums* are easy true bulbs that like it hot and dry. Will seed around.
- aflatunense* 'Purple Sensation', *atropurpureum*- 36", large purple balls
 - caeruleum*- small blue balls on 36" stems
 - christophii*- (Star of Persia) 12" lavender globe on 24" stems
 - giganteum*- dense ball of lilac pink on very tall stems, short life span
 - sphaerocephalon*- small onion shaped maroon balls on wiry 24" stems
 - moly*- small star shaped yellow flower clusters on short stems, naturalizes
 - karataviense*- short 6" stems with grapefruit sized lilac flowers
- Anemonella*- likes fertile, moist soil in a woodland setting. Plant small tubers in the fall. Available in white, pinks, pale greens, 6".
- Arisaema*- Woodland to part sun. Likes fertile, moist soil. Large cobra-like hooded flower, red berries in fall. Poisonous. 24". Tubers in Fall.
- Bulbocodium*- Meadow Saffron. Early *Colchicum*-like flowers. Corms are good for rock gardens and to naturalize in lawns. 3" Full to part sun.
- Chionodoxa*-Glory of the Snow. Star shaped six-petaled flowers in pale lavender with a white mid line. Good to naturalize under trees and shrubs. True bulbs that are best planted in Fall. 4-8" in full to part sun.
- Convallaria*- Lily of the Valley. Heavenly scented white flowers that grow by spreading rhizomes in part to full shade. 8". Takes dry shade once established.
- Crocus*- Very early flowering. Species types do best. Flowers will only open in full sun. Excellent corms to under plant trees and shrubs. Foliage dies down.
- ancyrensis* 'Golden Bunch' orange/yellow scented with 2" flowers
 - chrysanthus*- 3" flowers in cream to yellow, fragrant
 - speciosus*- 6" blooms in Fall, violet with darker blue veining
 - tommasinianus*- 4", purples and white, foliage has a white mid-line stripe
 - vernus*- Dutch crocus- may not achieve full size, many cultivars and colours
- Fritallaria*- best planted in fertile well drained soil in full to part sun.
- camschatcensis*- 18", black/purple bell shaped flowers
 - meleagris*- Checkered Lily-reliable, purple or white nodding bells, 18"
 - michailovskyi*- 8", red/purple squarish bells with yellow edges
 - pallidiflora*-18", cream to pale yellow squarish bells with faint checkers
 - pudica*- 6" pure yellow flowers that fade to red. Very hardy native.
- Galanthus*-Snowdrop. Hardy 4-6" white bells with green markings. Full/part sun.
- Iris*- bearded, crested and bulbous irises like average well drained soil while

beardless irises prefer moist but not boggy soil. All like full to part sun.
-bearded- small, dwarf, intermediate, large types. Have fuzzy beards on falls.
-*pallida*- variegated white or yellow leaves, blue flowers with sweet scent
-*crinata*-6" woodland iris. Prefers dapples shade, blue/lilac flowers with a white or yellow crest on each fall.
-*sibirica*- tall beardless irises that do well. Tolerates dry conditions if roots shaded. Many cultivars as well as tetraploids.
-*laevigata*, *pseudocorus*, *versicolor* are beardless water iris but will do well in average moist garden soil. Lots of cultivars available.
-*spuria*- tall beardless irises. Like it dry during dormancy. *I. orientalis*, *I. crocea* and *I. spuria* subsp. *musulmanica* are the hardiest.
-*histriones*, *reticulata*, *danfordiae*- bulbous irises, 4-6", full sun. Yellow, dark purple, pale blue with yellow or purple markings. Best planted en masse.

-*setosa*- Arctic Iris. 6-12". Blue to purple flowers. Rock garden plant.

Muscari- Grape Hyacinths- elongated spiky clusters of sweetly scented blue, white, bi-colour, or pale yellow flowers. Several cultivars available. Likes full to part sun. Foliage appears in fall and overwinters. Good for naturalizing.

Narcissus- Daffodils. Many sizes and bloom times. Divided into 12 divisions. Likes full sun and are distasteful to deer. Smaller cultivars do best. Need to be planted as early as possible as are slow to root in Fall. Like to be kept moist but well-drained throughout dormant period.

Nectaroscordum- allium family. Garlic scented down-facing bell-shaped flowers with pinkish outsides and cream insides. Seeds prodigiously. Full to part sun.

Puschkinia- Striped squill. 6-8" star shaped blossoms of palest blue on a short flower stalk. Self seeds and naturalizes easily. Tolerant of shade.

Sanguinaria- Bloodroot. 10" rhizomatous woodland plants. Bold saucer-like, deeply lobed gray-green leaves with maroon undersides. White solitary cup-shaped flowers with gold stamens produced with interesting seed pods. If inadequate moisture will go prematurely dormant reducing vigor. Divide when dormant.

Scilla- Siberian squill- 6". Similar to *Chionodoxa* but down facing blue flowers Full sun. Good under trees and shrubs. Naturalizes.

Tulipa- Come in several colours, singles, doubles, fringed, lily and peony shaped. Can have tulips starting as early as April and continuing until June. Plant hybrids and species deeply to get the longest life. Hybrids last 2-3 years before need to be replaced. Bulbs take 7 days of unfrozen ground to root. Tearing tunic will enable bulbs to sprout roots 3 days sooner.

-*greiggii*, *fosteriana*, *praestans*, *Darwin*, Lily-Flowered and Triumph tulips are longer lived so are good to naturalize.

-Species tulips do very well on the prairies and show up first in Spring
kaufmanniana- 10" waterlily shaped bowls of red, yellow and yellow/red.
fosteriana- 20". Largest flowers of any tulip. Species is red hybrids available

greiggii-12". Species is red but hybrids available. Foliage striped with purple

acuminata- 18". Light red or yellow with spiky petals.
batalinii-12". Bowl shaped yellow flowers. Several cultivars available.
clusiana- 9". Flowers red on the inside and creamy white on the outside.
kolpakowskiana-6". Yellow, cup-shaped fragrant flowers with yellow/red marks
linifolia- 6". bowl shaped red flowers with black bases
pulchella-6". Large cup shaped flowers that open into flat stars. Pink, purple, white and magenta cultivars.
tarda-6". Clusters of star-shaped fragrant yellow flowers with white tips.
turkestanica-12". Clusters of star-shaped flowers gray/green on the outside with white insides and yellow petal bases.
Trillium grandiflorum- Wakerobin. Lovely Eastern native. Woodland rhizomatous plant. Bright green quilted leaves arranged in 3's around the stem. Flowers have 3 green outer sepals and 3 inner showy white or pink petals. Likes acidic soil so amend before planting.

Summer bloomers

Liatris-Blazing Star- forms a corm or tuberous root. Needs full sun for best flowers. Does well in average, moist to dry soil. Plant in Spring.
 -*aspera*- Rough Gay feather. Bears purple 18" spiked flowers. Plant is 5'.
 -*ligulistylis*- Meadow Blazing Star. Rounded purple flowers on 24" spike.
 -*punctata*-Dotted Blazing Star. Crowded 12" spikes of rosy purple flowers.
 -*pycnostachya*- Kansas Gayfeather. Dense 18" spikes of bright purple flowers.
 -*spicata*- Spike Gayfeather. Most commonly available. Requires more moisture than others but drought tolerant once established. Purple and white cultivars available.
Lilium-Do best in full to part sun. Cultivars that flower from early through to late summer. Are many hybrids and cultivars available in all but blue. Flowers can be up, down or outward facing. True bulbs that are best planted in Fall but can be done in Spring. Will adjust depth to their liking. Well-drained soil a must.
 -Asiatic-hardest and most reliable for the Prairies.
 Canadian Belle series- Aurelian/Asiatic hybrids.
 Longiflorum/Asiatic hybrids. (LA). Very tall and very sturdy stems.
 -Oriental hybrids.- hardy here but short lived as flower late in summer.
 Fragrant.
 -Orienpets- Aurelian/Oriental hybrids.- not reliably hardy. Place in sheltered spot. Fragrant. Flower shape similar to Oriental but huge colour range.
 -*lancifolium*- tiger lily. Twinkle series has wide range of colours with spots.
 -*martagon*-Turk's Cap. Earliest to bloom. Downward facing reflexed turks cap flowers. Slow to establish and expensive but will spread to large colony with time. Does well in dappled shade.
 -*monadelphum*-produces yellow trumpet shaped flowers, spotted with maroon and purple with purplish/brown shading on the outside of

- petals.
- philadelphicum*-Wood Lily. Native orange spotted lily. Very drought tolerant
 - telephium*-very tall stems, orange turks cap flowers with maroon spotting
 - Citronella*- very tall, bright yellow down facing flowers. Prominent stamens

Tender Bulbs

There are a wide range of tender bulbs available that do well in the prairies. They can be planted in the ground or potted up in containers. Our hot days and cool nights suit them but place those with large leaves out of high winds. Bulbs can be stored during the winter in a cool dry place such as a frost free garage. Some make good houseplants year round. Most do best when given an early start indoors.

- Achimenes*-easy starter. Unusual hairy leaves with brilliant flowers in a wide range of colours. Obtain through specialty catalogues.
- Acidanthera*- Peacock Orchid. Fragrant gladiola cousin. Has white star-shaped blooms with maroon throats. Spear-like foliage. Widely available.
- Agapanthus*- Lily of the Nile. Keep moist except during winter. Flowers best when pot bound. Are dwarf cultivars available in blue and white. Specialty catalogues and some garden centers.
- Albuca*-pale yellowish/green downward daffodil-like flowers. Specialty catalogues.
- Amaryllis*- flower very well outside in-ground or potted. Needs dormant period. Allow leaves to remain on plant for as long as possible for biggest flowers
- Arisaema*- Jack in the Pulpit-mostly from Asia. Interesting hooded flowers in pink, lavender and white
- Babiana*-small, one inch flowers that run 10-20 per stem. Foliage is interesting.
- Begonia*-tuberous. Likes morning or late evening sun only. Loves to be fertilized with manure tea. Come in cascading, single, double, camellia and rose forms. Tubers get bigger every year producing bigger flowers.
- Bessera*-wiry stems support a dozen tiny fuchsia-like flowers. Three red outer petals, three red inner petals with a white stripe and long violet stamens. Specialty catalogues.
- Canna*- grown mostly for the huge tropical foliage of many colours and patterns. Dislikes wind but needs full sun. Some cultivars grow in ponds but all like moist soil. Start rhizomes in March inside.
- Chasmanthe*-Flowers are long tubes in orange, red or yellow. Dislikes cold so wait to put outside. Vigorous so plant in large pot. Water well. Specialty cat.
- Chlidanthus*-Fairy Lilies. Star-shaped bright yellow fragrant flowers. Plant in pot then when weather has warmed sink into garden. Specialty catalogues.
- Crinum*-Lily-like fragrant flowers on very tall stems. Pink and white cultivars. Allow foliage to die back naturally then rest dry in winter. Likes lots of water. Do not let freeze. Specialty catalogue.
- Crocasmia*- small corms available in Spring. Tall wands of orange, red or yellow tube-shaped flowers. Loved by hummingbirds. May be hardy when

mulched.

- Dahlia*-tuberous plant that ranges from the small to the very large flowered. All colours but blue and many different flower shapes. Some have bronze foliage. Do well here but must be started early in pots or in the ground. Dig tubers carefully in the fall as they get quite large. Store in moist peat or perlite in cool area. Divide when large. Each must have a piece of stem.
- Dierama*-Angel's Fishing Rod. Plant in pots early then sink into ground when warm. Sports many wands with tiny down facing bells in pink and white. Specialty.
- Eucomis*-Pineapple Lily. Very easy to grow. Strappy foliage. Tall pineapple-like spikes with many white to pink flowers and a grassy top.
- Galtonia*-Tall spikes of hanging white bells. Start in pots then plant directly into ground. Dig up and store cool and dry for winter.
- Gladiolus*-Many cultivars and colours. Plant in pots or in ground early. Are early, mid and late flowering cultivars.
- Haemanthus*-Blood Lily. Large sphere of pin cushion-like blood red flowers with long protruding stamens on a tall stalk. Grow like an amaryllis.
H. katherinae has been changed to *Scadoxus katherinae*.
- Hymenocallis*- Peruvian Daffodil. White or yellow flowers with recurved segments. Gets tall so plant deeply in heavy pot or in ground. Fragrant.
- Ipheon*- Violet blue star shaped flowers that bloom in cool weather. Potted bulbs bloom very quickly. May over winter if mulched. Low growing.
- Lycoris*-Naked Ladies. Flowers appear in late summer followed by strappy foliage. *L. squamigera* may overwinter if mulched well. Dislikes to be disturbed.
- Nerine*-Tall spikes with tubular flowers in orange, red or pink shades. Bulbs take a long time to flower so best in a pot and then brought inside before frost to flower.
- Oxalis*-Good ground cover. Green or purple clover-like foliage. Good house plant. Multiplies rapidly. White or pink upward facing bell-like flowers.
- Ranunculus*-Beautiful crepe papery balls in beautiful bright colours. Can be planted in pots or directly into the ground. Replace yearly.
- Sparaxis*- Harlequin Flower- Upward facing lily-like flowers in bright colours.
- Sprekelia*-Formosa lily. Flowers look like a cross between a lily and an amaryllis. Grow like an amaryllis. Large crimson flowers.
- Tigridia*- Flowers shaped like a wide shallow bowl with three lobed edge. Bright colours. Strappy foliage. Store like gladiolas in fall.
- Zantedeschia*- Calla Lily. Classic urn-shaped flowers in many colours. Likes to be kept moist and well fed. Needs a dormant period to reflower. Can be kept as a house plant over winter. Tubers multiply quickly.

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