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## OVERWINTERING SUMMER BULBS

One thing we gardeners can do to provide blooms for next summer is to dig up tender bulbs in the fall and store them over the winter. If bulbs are stored properly, they can be replanted in the spring to provide a long season of flowering beauty next year.

The word "bulb" is used to describe several different underground plant structures, including true bulbs, corms, tubers, and rhizomes. Some of the most popular tender "bulbs" grown in our area include dahlias, elephant ears, angel trumpets, gladiolus, canna lilies, and calla lilies.

We dig and store tender bulbs in the fall because they do not survive our freezing upstate winters. Most summer flowering bulbs should be dug and stored when the leaves on the plants turn yellow or are blackened by a light frost. Use a spading fork to lift the bulbs from the ground. Wash off any soil that clings to the bulbs. Most need to be stored dry in peat moss in a dark, cool dry place like a basement. Dahlias and cannas need to be stored with soil around them. Dahlias should be kept *slightly* moist over the winter.

Potted elephant ears and angel trumpets can be stored indoors in the basement near a sunny window after the foliage dies back with frost. In the late winter add a bit of water to get them waking up and move them to a sunny spot until time to place outdoors again.

When spring comes and the last frost has cleared, replant where they will get at least 6-10 hours of sun each day. They prefer a loose porous soil, neither too sandy nor clay-like. An amendment such as compost will often help improve difficult soil conditions. Fertilizer can also assist plant growth and encourage flowering.

Once summer arrives, your garden will be filled with colorful, bright blooms. Sit back, relax and watch your plants grow.

For specific plant information, call our Gardening Helpline weekday mornings at 585-753-2555.

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