

Storing Tender Bulbs for Winter

Flowering bulbs that are not hardy in this area need to be protected for the winter. Bulbs should be stored in a dry place that is away from cold, heat or sunlight. They should be stored in peat moss, sand, or vermiculite. It is important not to store your bulbs in airtight containers because this can lead to moisture buildup and rot and fungus. Be sure air can circulate around your stored bulbs. Do not store more than 2-3 layers deep, too many layers can generate heat and cause decay. Inspect your bulbs for disease when you prepare them for the winter. Keep only large healthy bulbs that are firm and free of spots. It will be helpful during spring planting if you remember to label your bulbs by type and color when you store them.

Begonia:

Allow frost to kill the tops, but not for the tubers to freeze. Lift tubers from the ground and let them dry for one week with about 5 inches of foliage still intact. Remove excess soil and foliage. Tubers should be stored in peat moss or vermiculite at around 50° F. Repot in early spring and keep warm. Move to a sunny location once shoots appear. Move outside after danger of frost.

Caladium:

Lift from ground before frost. Allow bulbs to dry in warm spot. Remove excess soil and cut back foliage after it dies back. Bulbs should be stored in 50-60° F. Pack bulbs loosely in peat moss or vermiculite. Repot in early spring about 2 inches deep. Move outdoors after danger of frost.

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Canna:

Allow frost to kill the tops but do not let the rhizomes freeze. Lift from ground and cut off dead tops. Hose off excess soil and allow rhizomes to dry. Store in a paper bag at 45-50° F.

Dahlia:

Lift from ground before hard freeze. Remove excess soil and foliage. Tubers do not like to completely dry out. Over winter in a slightly moistened layer of peat moss. Check monthly for dehydration and mist lightly if necessary.

Elephant Ear:

Lift from ground before first frost. Can be treated as a houseplant in the winter months. Can also store tubers. Clean excess soil from tuber and store in peat moss or vermiculite. Repot tubers 8 weeks before expected last frost. Plants will get larger as tubers age.

Gladiola:

Lift from ground after foliage yellows from first frost. Cut stems to 1 inch and allow corms to dry. Keep only new plump corms. Store in peat moss or sand. In spring, plant directly outside after danger of frost. To extend the season of bloom, stagger plantings.

