

# Tips on winter gardening



SPRING MAY BE MONTHS AWAY, but spring flowers are ready to be picked at florist shops everywhere. It's best to select tulips, daffodils and hyacinths when they are still tightly budded, so that they will open fully in your home.

If you can't leap ahead a month to stroll through a garden of dazzling tulips, sunny daffodils and fragrant hyacinths, the next best thing is to arrange a bunch of these spring flowers indoors. Here are some how-to's.

First, select flowers at your florist's when they're still buds. The younger and less developed they are, the longer they will last in the vase at home.

Tulip buds should display only a hint of their color. Choose hyacinths with florets tightly clustered and just beginning to reveal color. Daffodil buds should be swelled with stems gracefully arched at the top, resembling a swan's neck.

By the time you get your spring flowers home, chances

are they will be slightly wilted. To revive them they must be "hardened," which simply means infused with water until stems become firm.

Remove one half inch from each stem, cutting on a slant with a sharp knife. Then wrap stems and blossoms in wax paper. Daffodils should be wrapped up to but not including the flower heads. Wrap stems tightly to keep them straight.

Place cut blooms in a deep bucket of tepid water to stand in a cool place for three to six hours.

Harden daffodils separately. Daffodils must be hardened separately because they exude a substance toxic to other flowers. Afterwards, however, they can be arranged in fresh water with

many colors that you should have no difficulty finding combinations that complement each other and your decor. Choose an assortment of darks and lights for value contrast.

Every arrangement must have an apex formed by the tallest flower. Tulips and daffodils, which are the tallest flowers, usually take this position.

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