

Fall bulbs = beautiful spring flowers

Spring-blooming bulbs seem like such a miracle. Plant them in the fall and like magic, beautiful-colored flowers emerge in early spring. As with all gardening, it is important to select the right location and take the time to prepare the soil.

Selection

Pay careful attention to where you plant bulbs because they demand excellent drainage. Ideal places include slopes, raised beds and any other spot where water can drain freely. Don't plant them closer than four feet from the house because the home's warmth will cause them to grow prematurely, which will harm their ability to bloom well and stay healthy year after year.

Choose bulbs the way you select fresh fruit. "Bulbs should be fat, but not mushy when you squeeze them," says Aaron Mahoney, The Home Depot's gardening expert. "Make sure they don't have mildew or rot. If they do, the bulbs won't make it through the winter."

Planting

Bulbs can be planted any time until the soil freezes; however tulips, daffodils and hyacinth require a period of extreme cold to stimulate their growth. Once planted, bulbs function like factories, storing and processing their own food through the cold winter months.

To ensure good drainage, dig to a depth of at least 18 inches, working in compost or sphagnum peat moss to improve soil texture and adding a fertilizer made specifically for bulbs.

"The secret to a lush, full-looking garden is to plant bulbs in layers," says Mahoney. "This will ensure that you have more flowers over a longer period.

If you do it right, you can even enjoy beautiful blooms from March through June."

Set the larger bulbs, such as tulips and daffodils, on the deepest layer of earth. Cover them with soil and then plant the smaller bulbs, such as crocus, on top. The early blooming bulbs will bring colour to your garden at the same time the foliage of the lower bulbs begins to appear.

In addition to planting bulbs, now is the time to dig up and store sensitive bulbs that cannot withstand the winter. Use a spading fork to gently lift the bulbs from the ground. Inspect them for signs of disease, and discard those that are affected.

Bulb Sampling

- Galanthus, or snowdrops, appear in early spring, pushing their way up through the late snow.

- Tulips come in many colors and are available in short, medium and tall sizes, as well as early and late-blooming varieties.

- Leucojum require little maintenance and produce bell-like blooms of pure white with a green spot on each petal.

- Anemone produce white, blue or pink blooms that appear in early spring and are great for rock gardens or wooded locations.

- Muscari look like bunches of blue and white grapes and are perfect for planting below other bulbs.

- Narcissus, frequently called daffodils, are available in a wide variety of heights, bloom times and colors.

—News Canada

ADVERTORIAL

Web Sites on the rise local business reports...

Web Site creation is on the rise, according to local business owner, Ron Brooks of Labyrinth Industries Inc. who build web sites from scratch.

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We asked Labyrinth Industries Inc. what seems to be the reason for this increase?

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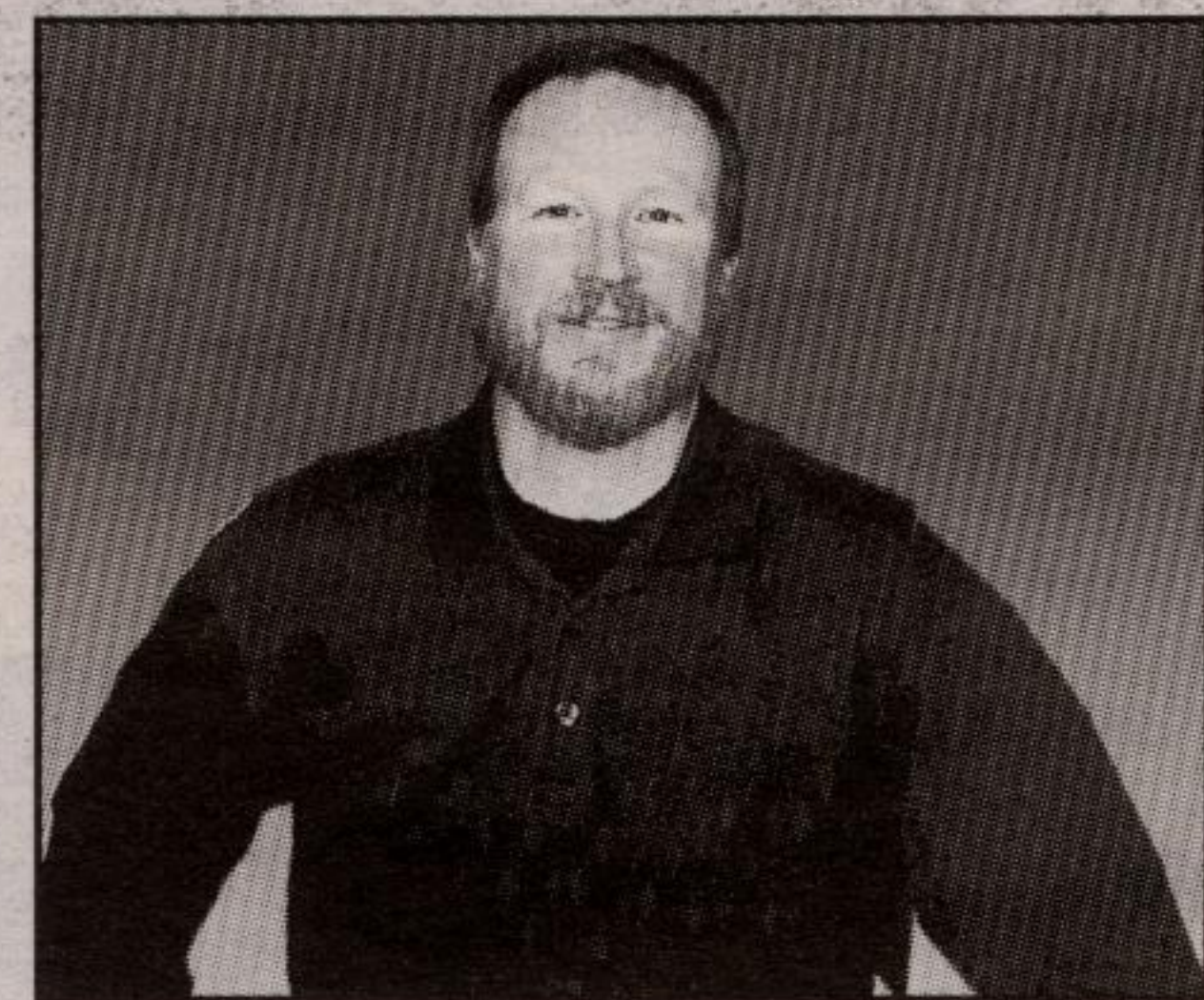
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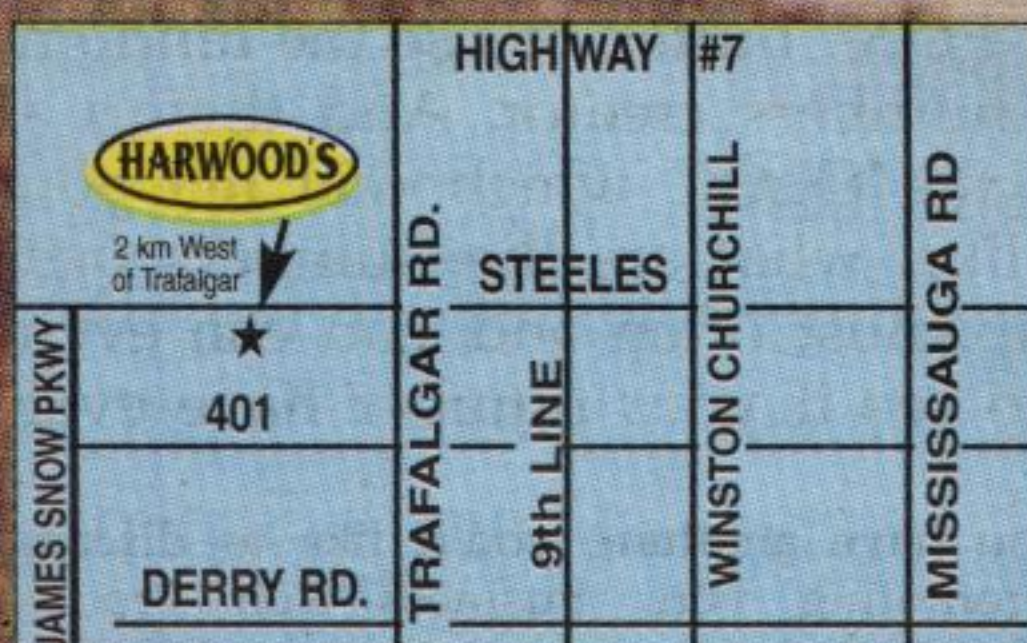
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