

Delightful but underused bulbs



Camassia

This western North American wildflower blooms in late spring; this picture was taken on June 1, 2014 in my front garden. They grow to heights of about 2-3 feet have spikes of star shaped, blue/purple flowers. There are several varieties, however I have found that the biggest ones are the easiest to grow, these ones are about 10 years old. One very interesting looking, shorter variety with variegated leaves has died every time I have planted it.

They spread slowly and as with most other bulbs the foliage dies back after the flowers are finished.

Camassia are best grown in moist, fertile, slightly acidic, humusy soils in full sun to light shade. Mine are planted in morning sun. Plant the bulbs 4-6" deep and 6" apart in fall. They tolerate clay and wet conditions better than most other spring bulbs.

Camassia are great plant choices for attracting both hummingbirds and butterflies to the garden,

providing them with an abundance of sweet nectar, and they also look great planted with perennials, such as bleeding heart, and other flowering bulbs like daffodils and tulips

Iris bucharica is part of the Juno family of irises originating from Afghanistan, and surrounding areas. It grows on stony and grassy slopes. It is scented and has unusual bicolored flowers and distinctively placed leaves along its flower stalk. They grow to about 18 inches, but mine don't get that tall.

They are planted in the fall, about 4 inches deep and apart and will bloom in mid-spring. Good soil drainage is required. They grow on alkaline soil, almost all our local soils are somewhat alkaline but you can add some limestone after planting.

Directions for growing conditions really vary, most say full sun, with warm, dry summers needed to prevent the roots from rotting away. Mine are growing in morning sun, on not so well drained soil, that gets watered about once a week. Try them they're gorgeous.





Species crocuses are the ones that grow wild in areas like southern Europe, North Africa and the Middle East. They tend to be shorter with multiple flowers, as many as 6 or more per stem, and the best thing for unknown reasons squirrels don't like them. They don't dig them up and they don't eat the flowers, I have no idea why. So which ones are the species crocuses, two that I have had great success with are *Crocus ancyrensis*, it has bright golden yellow flowers with multiple flowers per bulb, and spreads easily but not fast and *Crocus tommasianus*, which has blue/violet flowers, and naturalizes well. It is sometimes referred to as woodland crocus as it seems happy in less than full sun.



Those of us with less than full sun often wish we could grow tulips successfully, almost all tulips require lots of sun and then you have to leave the leaves to die back and it takes forever. *Tulipa sylvestris* is often referred to as the woodland tulip as it will flower in shady areas. It has scented, golden yellow flowers, on unusually for a tulip arching stems. It grows about 15 inches tall with I feel really pretty, yellow flowers. There is some disagreement on the amount of shade it will flourish in, I have several patches, some morning sun, some in late afternoon sun only, and almost behind a peony, and the original patch is almost in the dark. They aren't expensive and are not difficult to find.



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