Spring planted bulbs extend growing season



Calla lilies, like Night Cap with its black flowers and the white blooms of Crystal Clear, are spring planted bulbs that thrive in full sun or part shade and can be cut to create an elegant display indoors. Photo/Longfield Gardens

By Melinda Myers

Keeping your garden looking its best throughout the growing season and into fall is possible with the help of low maintenance spring planted bulbs. Plant them in spring among other annuals or perennials and watch as these bulbs brighten the garden, adding new life to your late season gardens.

Whether your gardens and containers are in full sun or shade you'll enjoy the attractive foliage and pop of color that dahlias, cannas, calla lilies, caladiums and elephant ears

will add to the landscape.

These easy care plants reward you with loads of beauty. Just plant, water and enjoy. Quality online retailers offer the greatest variety of color, shapes and sizes as well as planting and care instructions.

Grow dahlias in sunny areas with at least six hours of sunlight for the best floral display. Simply plant the tuberous roots 4- to 6-inches deep with the stem facing up after the danger of frost has passed.

Use dahlias in a cutting garden or as an attractive screen along fences and property lines. Use the shorter more compact border dahlias, like Gallery Pablo in containers on your patio, balcony or deck where you and the hummingbirds will enjoy their blooms.

Wait until the danger of frost has passed to plant cannas in a full sun to partially shaded locations. Plant the canna rhizomes horizontally 2- to 3-inches deep with the growing point facing up. Take advantage of their bold foliage and use cannas as a backdrop in the flower border or screen in the landscape. Use as a vertical accent in a large container or select dwarf varieties for smaller pots.

Calla lilies are another spring planted bulb that thrives in full sun or part shade. The speckled foliage adds color to the garden all season long. Include these 1- to 2- feet-tall plants in the front or middle of the flower garden or as a vertical accent or filler in a pot. And don’t forget to cut a few flowers to enjoy indoors. The black flowers of Night Cap teamed with the white blooms of Crystal Clear create an elegant display.

Like the other bulbs, wait for the danger of frost to pass before planting them outdoors. Plant the knobby rhizomes two to four inches deep with the growing point facing up.

Add some color and plenty of wow factor to shaded areas with the foliage of caladiums and elephant ears. These tropical beauties thrive when soil and air temperatures are warm. Wait for the danger of frost to pass and the soil to warm, 65 to 70 degrees, before planting them in the garden.

Use caladiums to brighten containers, dress up window boxes or edge a shady pathway. The colorful leaves stand out amongst the greens of shade gardens. Team variegated varieties with complimentary colored begonias, coleus or impatiens.

Include elephant ears in the garden or containers. Their large heart shaped leaves give a tropical feel to the patio, deck or pool area. Consider planting one, two or more to create an impressive welcome for guests or a bold statement in the landscape. They pair nicely with caladiums, coleus and other shade loving plants.

Make this the best season yet with the help of spring flowering bulbs. You'll enjoy the variety and late season color these easy care plants provide.

Melinda Myers has more than 30 years of gardening experience and has written more than 20 gardening books, including "Small Space Gardening".