

Bulbs for Dry Areas



Many bulbs are specialised for life in dry areas. In fact, that's why they are bulbs – the plant withdraws all its goodness and stores it in a bulb so it can survive the harsh

conditions. Many will actually flower better if they experience a hot baking in the summer. We can make the most of this to enhance dry areas of the garden where other plants find life difficult.

What bulbs are the best for dry areas?

The following bulbs are ideal for dry areas such as under hedges and along the north wall of the house. As long as they receive enough moisture in winter and early spring for growth to commence, they will flower well year after year.

Alliums

Members of the onion family, most alliums prefer a warm sunny position with good drainage. The most common varieties sold in New Zealand are Moly, a cluster flowered medium yellow on 30 cm stems; and Sphaerocephalon, a deep purple/mauve ball on 60 cm stems. The flowers of Sphaerocephalon are great for dried arrangements.

Babiana

Short growing, babiana are available in mixed blue and purple shades. Although very small bulbs, they need to be planted relatively deep, 12 cm or more, an adaptation to prevent baboons digging them up to eat in their native Africa. Their name is derived from their common name "Baboon flowers".

Brodiaea

Early summer flowering, brodiaea are a great touch of colour when most bulbs have finished flowering. Queen Fabiola is the most common variety sold; it is a strong growing strain of a light violet purple colour. Brodiaea need a good dry spell in summer to flower successfully the following year.

Ixia

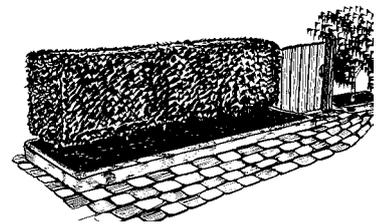
Spectacular in mid to late spring with bright yellow, gold, pink and red shades on tall 40–60 cm stems. Normally available as mixed colours and occasionally as individual colours, the most common being ixia viridiflora, a stunning blue-green.

Sparaxis

Superb for naturalising as they increase rapidly by bulb division as well as by self-seeding. Available in mixed shades of white, pink, rose, orange and red. Growing 20–30 cm tall, the flowers resemble freesias in shape. Mid spring flowering.

Tritonia

Predominantly available as mixed colours in white, orange and pink shades, tritonia will produce masses of



flowers in late spring. They have a very similar flower shape to sparaxis and freesias, although they flower much later, filling the gap between spring and summer flowering bulbs. The flowers are carried on 20 cm stems and they last reasonably well in the vase.