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Tiny Treasure

plus a partial list of other Minor Bulbs

Almost hidden amongst the giant world of flamboyant bulbs are some delightful tiny treasures. These are classified as "minor" bulbs. Some are true wildflowers while most are hybrid derivatives of wild species. Many carpet the late winter and early spring meadows of their native habitats with vivid patches of colour. A few more are summer or autumn-flowering.



Some minor bulbs are hardy enough to flower through the snow and freezing cold. Crocus, Snowdrop, Glory-of-the-Snow and Striped Squill are famous winter-bloomers. Ironically, these species cannot withstand the balmy humid and moist conditions found in milder subtropical climates or being overcrowded and shaded by competitive plantings.

In dry and mild climates, bulbs native to the Mediterranean and South African regions are ideal choices. These include: Anemone coronaria, Babiana (Baboon Flower), Freesia, Homeria collina (Cape Tulip), Ixia maculata (Corn Lily), Hyacinthoides hispanica (Spanish Bluebell), miniature Narcissus, Ranunculus, Sparaxis, Tritonia (Flame Freesia) amongst others.

The secret is planting in, or creating the microclimate appropriate to each bulb's natural environment. Some love cold winters, and most enjoy cool and damp springs followed by drier summer conditions for resting.



Most varieties prefer full sun or partial shade. This is especially important as they emerge early in the season. Thus most Minor Bulbs are ideally suited to planting beneath deciduous trees and shrubs. There they receive strong winter and early spring sunshine for best growth and flowering. Then as they finish and head into dormancy, the deciduous trees leaf-out.

This leafy canopy often provides the dry shelter the bulbs require for undisturbed dormancy. In autumn the falling leaves mulch the bulbs and provide some winter

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