

By Kylee Baumle

Looking forward to spring

I've said before that when fall comes around, this gardener is tired. Though I don't exactly welcome the winter that follows, autumn brings rest from weeding, deadheading, cultivating, and numerous other chores in the garden. Most of those things I love to do, especially weeding and deadheading; if I didn't, I wouldn't garden. But the rewards for doing all that are the biggest motivators of all: gorgeous blooms spring through fall, scrumptious fruits and vegetables that taste better than grocery store versions, birds and butterflies that enjoy my garden as much as I do, and even in winter there are visually beautiful images. (Red-twig dogwoods, anyone?)

Nonetheless, I'm about gardened out by now and my numerous houseplants will provide just enough of that gardening fix I seem to need on a regular basis. So who's going to plant all those bulbs that just showed up on my doorstep?

Because of my garden writing, I am sometimes gifted with gardening products, including plants and bulbs. Companies hope that I will like their products enough to write about them on my blog, thus spreading the word to other gardeners. Sometimes I do and sometimes I don't. This is the first time I've received free bulbs and the great thing about this was that I got to choose which ones I wanted. Well, that and the part about them being free.

Over the years, each autumn I've planted bulbs that will make my garden come alive with color in the spring. And each autumn, I whine about having to plant them. But I continue to add to the ones I already have, because my mind's eye can see what will happen in spring. I remember how every year my heart sings when all those winter-sleeping beauties wake up and flood the place with color.

The fragrant ones especially thrill me. Don't get me wrong – I love the smell of a crisp winter's day, but nothing beats the scent of hyacinths after being cooped up for the last several months.

I'll never forget the day I was down on my knees working in the garden and realized for the first time that poet's narcissus (a common daffodil) has a beautiful fragrance if you get close enough to smell it.

This year, I'm planting little alliums (*Allium sphaerocephalon*) and really big ones (*Allium giganteum* 'Globemaster'). These onion cousins are great for tucking in between other plants because their foliage is minimal and the focus is on those purple balls at the top of tall stems. Like most spring bulbs, they'll do their thing and then go dormant when hot summer arrives.

We're lucky here in the north, because we can grow so many beautiful spring bulbs that those in the south can't. That's our trade-off for not being able to plant things like amaryllis, tropical hibiscus, bougainvilleas and other things that grow in the ground all year round in places like Florida and Texas. Our tulips and most daffodils need an extended period of cold in order to bloom properly, so southern climates can't grow them in the ground year-to-year the way we do. They also can't do peonies, lilacs, most apples and sweet cherries for the same reason.

There are exceptions to every rule though, as any diehard gardener knows, which is the reason we sometimes push the limits of our growing zones. I know someone in Van Wert who has a crape myrtle (*Lagerstroemia indica*) that survives our winter year after year, despite the fact that crape myrtles are a southern tree, most of which are only hardy to zones 7-9. We are still in Zone 5b, even after the new zoning map released earlier this year. Of course, if our winters continue being like last year's, that opens up a whole new catalog of things we'll be able to grow, but I'm not counting on that.

So on the day that I'm writing this, while I can still be outside with just a sweatshirt between the sun and me, I'll get those *Allium* bulbs in the ground and dream of spring when their lollipop heads pop up and make me glad I went to the effort.

Read more at Kylee's blog, Our Little Acre, at [www.ourlittleacre.com](http://www.ourlittleacre.com) and on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/OurLittleAcre](http://www.facebook.com/OurLittleAcre). Contact her at [PauldingProgressGardener@gmail.com](mailto:PauldingProgressGardener@gmail.com).