

The Green Scene

Meetings and Announcements

Master Gardener Program - It's On the Way!

From Erinne Rabanal, our Master Gardener Coordinator:

Thank you to all for your interest in the UC Master Gardener Program. The cohort for spring 2026 classes has been selected. However, we expect to begin recruitment for another group in later spring or early summer for the second cohort in January 2027. Also, Erinne is beginning a Master Gardener newsletter. If you want to support the program or join the newsletter, please feel free to contact her at erabanal@ucanr.edu

Home Orchards, second edition

After some little time, the second edition of the UC publication *Home Orchards* is in its final stages prior to printing. The files are to go to the printer Nov. 4, with books in warehouse Nov. 24.

Annual Winter Fruit Tree Pruning Demonstration

We plan to hold our annual winter pruning demonstration for deciduous fruit trees and grapes during the first week of February 2026. We have not decided on the date, but I will announce when available.

Happy Thanksgiving

Next Horticultural Tour - Very Early Announcement

We are now thinking of the Baltics in 2026; that would be Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, with likely a visit to Helsinki. More details when available.

Roses

It's a little early for winter pruning of roses. I prefer December and January.

Fall Planted Bulbs

Perhaps we remember a welcome spring garden of crimson red and brilliant yellow tulips in a city where we lived. Or we can still picture lavender crocus pushing up through ground with patches of snow still visible. Flowers such as these are planted as bulbs in fall before winter, so cold temperatures satisfy their internal chilling requirement, leading to flowering. Although some northern favorites don't do well in the Bakersfield area, others do, and a number of bulbs or bulb-like plants from parts of the world, such as southern

Africa, do quite well in our similar Mediterranean climate. We may also find the native *Brodiaea* providing a display of spring flowers in rangeland settings.

Bulbs are quite easy to add to a garden or shrub bed. (I'm going to use the term "bulb" instead of more specific botanical definitions for bulb-like structures, e.g., corms, tubers, rhizomes.) Planting depth should be about twice the height of the bulb. Fertilizer containing phosphorus and a little nitrogen can be mixed with soil when planting, but nutrient levels in most home landscapes are sufficient for flowering in spring. Bulbs can be planted individually, or a bed can be excavated, the bulbs set in place, then covered all at once. A sunny location is generally best for foliage growth after flowering. In a favorable location bulbs are perennials, although their flower production may diminish with time.

It is also possible to plant bulbs in containers and move them around as accent pieces. Bulbs can also be "forced," which means satisfying their chilling requirement and then placing indoors in a suitable container for a one-time show.

Tulips are perhaps the most recognizable flower from fall-planted bulbs, but tulips have a higher chilling requirement than many others. Although tulips are not at their best in the Bakersfield area, locations in the mountains or desert with additional chilling hours are more favorable for this flower. In contrast, *Narcissus* species, also called daffodils, do quite well on the San Joaquin valley floor. These have trumpet-shaped flowers, often in shades of yellow. Dozens of varieties exist, including bicolors and some with shorter or longer trumpets. 'King Alfred' is an old variety with especially large flowers. Of the bulbs popular in the North, *Crocus*, although not at its best here, will give a nice spring display. Purple is the traditional color, but pinks and variegated flowers are available. *Muscari*, or grape hyacinth, is another northern plant that is easy to grow and successful here.

A number of bulbs from Mediterranean regions are less well known but are adapted to the Bakersfield area due to similarities in climate. *Freesia* has a waxy, fragrant, tubular flower, originally white, but breeders have introduced yellow, golden orange, pink, red, and lavender-blue. *Ixia* is also known as African corn lily, with flowers of red, orange, yellow, or a couple of other colors on long slender stalks. The flowers last about a week when cut, making them a crisp accent to a bouquet. Blue *Scilla campanulata* (renamed *Endymion hispanicus*) from Spain resembles the English bluebell. There are many others, such as anemones, *Sparaxis*, *Tritonia*, and *Watsonia*. The most popular Mediterranean bulb in our area is probably *Ranunculus* with its multicolored papery flowers, fall-planted in Bakersfield, but spring-planted in cold winter areas.

A note of caution though - bulbs may rot if planted where heavily irrigated in summer. You may need to dig them up after foliage has dried and store if used in a wet area. Many gardeners omit this step and simply let the bulbs fend for themselves, replanting as necessary.

Below are a couple of photos from Bakersfield showing what can be done, mostly *ranunculus* shown.



John Karlik
Environmental Horticulture/Environmental Science

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