

**WHAT TO DO WHEN YOUR BULBS/CORMS ARRIVE**

Saffron crocus grows from root structures called corms. The corms have the appearance of small bulbs and are therefore typically referred to as bulbs.

Corms should be planted as soon as possible after arrival (within a week) so they can begin the process of rooting and establishment before freezing weather. Hold only for short periods in a dry and cool 40–50°F (4–10°C) location. Storing for too long will result in corms sprouting and becoming unviable.

SITE SELECTION & PREPARATION

Saffron crocus performs best in a well-drained soil, rich in organic matter. Avoid excessive nitrogen and fresh manure. Plants thrive in full sun but will tolerate part shade, requiring at least 5–6 hours of sun per day at the time of bloom. Plants are hardy in USDA Zones 5–8 and have been known to perennialize in Zone 4.

BED PREPARATION

Beds should be weed-free and amended according to needs determined by a soil test. Loosen the soil to a depth of 6–8" to help ensure adequate root establishment.

PLANT SPACING

Plant corms 3–4" deep and 3–4" apart. Press corms into the prepared soil or place into holes created by a dibble and cover with soil. Plant corms flat side down (tops of corms often display an elongated piece of dried stem material and bottoms often display the small white shoots). Corms will multiply over successive years in the ground. After 4 to 5 years, dig, divide, and replant to prevent overcrowding.

IRRIGATION

If the ground is dry at the time of planting, water immediately after planting. Thereafter, normal rainfall should suffice. Do not overwater. Saturated soil will cause corms to rot. Established plants are relatively drought tolerant.

MULCH

Mulching is not recommended as it creates a welcoming habitat for small mammals which will readily consume crocus plants and corms.

GROWING ON

Grass-like foliage will develop 4 to 8 weeks after planting. Flowers may also develop at this time, although corms do not always bloom in the same fall they are planted; the first harvest may not occur until the following fall (one year after planting). Note that foliage dies back during the hot months of summer, then flowers and foliage sprout again in the Fall.

HARVEST

The stigma of the flower is the thread of saffron used for cooking. You can expect each corm to produce 2 to 4 flowers and each flower to produce three stigmas. The easiest way to harvest is to pick whole flowers just before they are fully open. Grasp the blooms at the base and pull up. Once harvested, bring the flowers to a convenient location for processing. While the flowers are still fresh, separate the orange-red stigmas from the center of each flower. Air-dry the threads in a dark and warm 80–95°F (27–35°C) location.

STORAGE & USE

Store dried saffron in an airtight container in a cool, dark location. Saffron quality can degrade when subjected to light; if not in a dark location, store in an opaque container or wrapped in foil.

PESTS & DISEASES

Both corms and plants are attractive to rodents. Protect the crop from rodent damage throughout the crop's lifecycle.

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