

MARTHA STEWART

Living

*love
your*
home

**STYLE
IDEAS**
*for every
room of
the house*





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A Way With Bulbs

Dutch gardeners share their **EXPERT GROWING TIPS** for planting spring-blooming blue flowers at Bedford.

ON MY TV SHOW. I have the opportunity to meet extraordinary experts involved in all kinds of endeavors. Some of my favorite guests are gardeners, plant growers, and landscape designers from all over the world. I learn about so many types of plants and see so many gardens, and I thoroughly enjoy the time I spend showcasing the specific talents of the people involved.

I got so excited when I met the team from the Netherlands Flower Bulb Information Center (director Sally Ferguson did a segment on blue-flowering bulbs). By the time the taping was finished, we had come up with the idea to ask Dutch garden designer Jacqueline van der Kloet to help me with the underplanting of my linden allée at Bedford using a wonderful assortment of blue-flowering, successively blooming bulbs from Dutch growers.

The International Flower Bulb Centre's technical director, Frans Roozen, offered to come to the United States with the bulbs. He and Jacqueline made sure that the varieties of bulbs would provide the desired blue effect for the longest span of time.

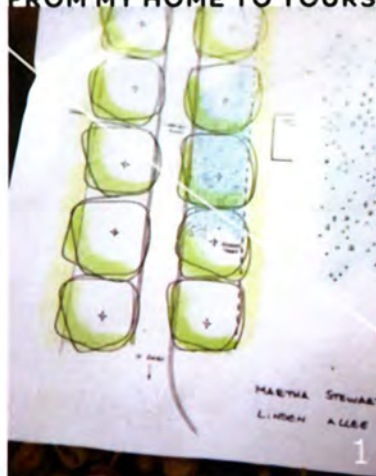
It is not easy to plan such a massive planting undertaking, and I am sure I would have underestimated the quantities of bulbs needed for the borders along the path. But with the advice of Jacqueline and Frans, everything worked out beautifully, and this spring's blooms were even better than I could have hoped for.

And, of course, I cannot wait for next spring, which promises an even more vibrant blooming because each of the species chosen is known for its "multiplier" effect—they all multiply prodigiously, and seemingly effortlessly, year after year.



ONE GREAT PROJECT At our worktable, we assembled our "batterie de jardin"—all the tools needed for planting 115,000 bulbs. With me are Jacqueline van der Kloet and Frans Roozen.

FROM MY HOME TO YOURS *planting bulbs*



BY THE HANDFUL
We each got a great deal of pleasure distributing the bulbs on top of the allée's well-prepared beds.

nature-inspired bulb plantings

This loose planting style yields spring flowers that look as though they have sprung up on their own.

1. Jacqueline van der Kloet's rough garden sketch of the linden allée, the chosen location for the mass planting of blue-flowering bulbs.

2. The Dutch-grown bulbs were shipped in plastic mesh bags. We unpacked each variety and inspected them to make sure they were healthy. We were happy to see that they were all in pristine condition.

3. We combined the anemone, crocus, grape hyacinth, scilla, bluebell, and chionodoxa bulbs in a wheelbarrow so they could be mixed up gently by hand, using fewer of the large bulbs and more of the small varieties.

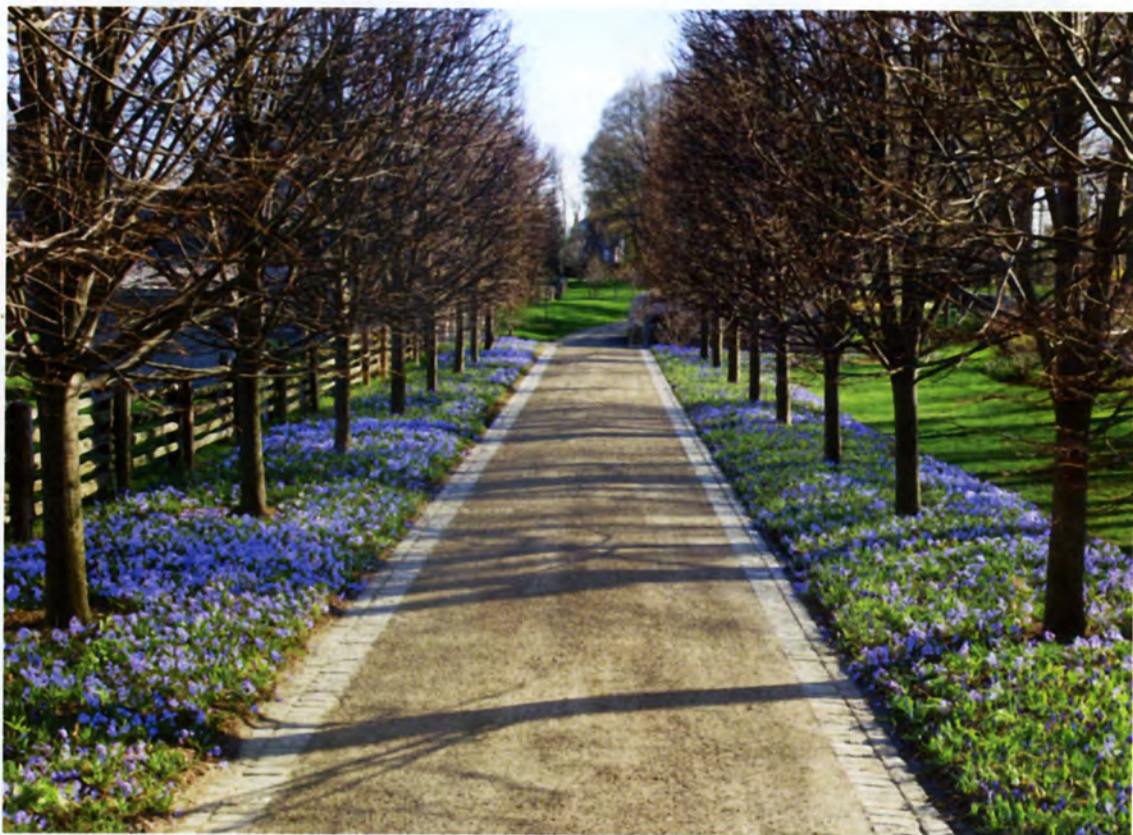
4. Jacqueline showed us her special technique of lightly tossing

handfuls of the premixed bulbs on the surface of the border instead of planting in strict traditional blocks of color. This random approach is the key to her naturalistic style.

5. With a trowel, the bulbs are planted individually or in small clusters, with the small bulbs planted five inches deep and the larger bulbs eight inches deep. Our visiting experts told us not to worry about planting each bulb right side up. They orient themselves naturally.

6. After "watering in" the newly planted bulbs and waiting through winter, I was treated to a beautiful months-long display in the spring, starting with the first crocuses.





BLUES IN BLOOM
Clockwise, from top left Several types of muscari were planted, including *Muscari* 'Valerie Finnis' and *M. latifolium*. The linden allée goes from an entrance gate to the

stable complex; the gravel road is edged with Belgium block. Some of the thickly planted blue flowers: muscari, anemone, and chionodoxa.

my bulb basics

These steps will ensure a spectacular flower display and offer years of beauty and enjoyment.

BUYING

Order your bulbs from a reputable supplier, and check with the seller that what you are ordering will provide the desired effect (for example, a good bloom sequence).

READYING THE BED

Prepare the bed to be planted before the bulbs arrive. Dig into soil with a trowel, and pull the trowel toward you to create a hole slightly deeper than your desired planting depth. (Plant small bulbs three inches deep in warmer areas or five inches deep in colder ones; larger bulbs six inches or eight inches deep. Incorporate composted material and bulb food for added nutrients.

PLANTING

Plant on a cool day when the earth is slightly damp but still friable. Bulbs need soil that drains well. Don't try to plant in mud or ultradry earth. Enlist the help of a friend so that the entire area can be planted on the same day to ensure a unified look and proper density of planting.

WATERING

Once planted, top the bed with a thin layer of rich compost, and water the area well.

COMPANION PLANTS

If adding ground covers or perennials such as hellebores, do so while planting the bulbs to avoid disturbing the bed later.

Thanks to the International Flower Bulb Centre and the Netherlands Flower Bulb Information Center for all their help with the design and the bulbs. I couldn't have done it without them.

waves of blue

When massed together, these six species of miniature spring bulbs make a grand statement over a period of six to eight weeks.

1. GRECIAN WINDFLOWER
(*Anemone blanda*)

Scores of daisy-like flowers pop up in early to mid-spring. Soak the dry tubers overnight in water before planting them.

2. GLORY-OF-THE-SNOW
(*Chionodoxa luciliae*)

White starlike centers accent each pristine pale-blue flower.

3. GRAPE HYACINTH
(*Muscari 'Valerie Finnis'*)

This vigorous variety is the palest blue of its family.

4. SIBERIAN SQUILL
(*Scilla siberica*)

Tiny multistemmed flowers of electric blue sit atop thick, glossy leaves.

5. WOODLAND CROCUS
(*C. tommasinianus*)

Lilac-blue trumpets open best in full sun, so keep that in mind when planting these eager naturalizers.

6. GRAPE HYACINTH
(*M. latifolium*)

Eccentric and sturdy two-tone blue-black flowers stay upright for a longer period than their cousins.

Our new line of bulbs at Home Depot, available this fall, includes a similar mix of spring-blooming blue flowers.





Everything worked out BEAUTIFULLY, and the first year's blooms were EVEN BETTER than I could have hoped. I, of course, cannot wait for next spring.

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MEET THE GARDEN DESIGNER

Watch Jacqueline van der Kloet's bulb-planting technique on our iPad edition. Download it now from the iTunes Store.

BETTER BORDERS

The payoff for all the hard work: a blooming spring border full of glorious textures and shades of blue for two whole months—followed later on by hellebores and native Allegheny pachysandra.