



**Lyon County - O'Brien County - Osceola County - Sioux County**

# CLIPPINGS

*A Weekly Column from Iowa State University Extension and Outreach*

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**For Immediate Release**

## **For Early Spring Blooms Try Minor Bulbs**

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It may seem too early to think about spring blooms. After all, most gardeners have just put their gardens to bed. But fall is the time to plant spring-flowering bulbs.

If you are planning a spring garden, consider adding some of the minor bulbs. Minor bulbs refer to a group of small-sized flowering bulbs that emerge very early in the spring. They often don't make it into one's landscape, which is unfortunate since they offer a pop of early season color with their attractive flowers. Many naturalize well and can be long-lived with minimal care.

One of the first flowering bulbs to emerge in spring is the common snowdrop. It has a dainty, white bell-like flower. The plant reaches about four inches in height and is easy to grow. It can withstand a coating of late season snow. The common snowdrop can be planted in either full sun or partial shade.

Winter aconite is another flower to show itself very early. The buttercup-like yellow flower is a cheery sight especially when planted en masse (in a group). Winter aconite is a low growing, rapidly spreading flower that, like the common snowdrop, can tolerate being covered by snow. It makes an excellent choice for rock gardens and will grow in full sun or light shade.

One minor bulb that I planted in my perennial flower bed is the striped squill. This unusual flower has blue stripes bisecting its white petals. It has a spike form and reaches about six inches tall. It was always such a joy to find a scattering of this delicate flower in bloom when I tidied up the flower bed in early spring. The striped squill will readily multiply and can grow in full sun or partial shade.

Two other flowers in the minor bulb category are the crocus and grape hyacinth. The crocus has a cup-shaped flower and comes in a variety of colors. It reaches only three to four inches tall and does well in full or partial sun. Crocus come in both early spring and fall blooming varieties. It spreads easily and can add wonderful color to a spring garden.

Try grape hyacinth for a dazzling pop of blue in the spring landscape. It reaches six to eight inches in height and adds great contrast to other spring blooming bulbs like daffodils and tulips.

Because of their small size, most reaching less than six inches in height, minor bulbs work well planted in rock gardens, as border plantings, or in containers. They can be planted under deciduous shrubs and trees providing spring color before the trees and shrubs leaf out. You can also interplant the bulbs with other perennials. Group plantings offer a greater visual impact. Blooms and foliage from later season perennials will help mask the bulb foliage when it begins to die back.

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