

TIPS ON GROWING GLADIOLUS FOR CUT FLOWERS

Native to South Africa, Gladiolus grow best in full sun with good water drainage. One tip we've heard is that if it's a good place to grow tomatoes, it is a good place to grow gladiolas. After temperatures have warmed in the Spring, mix compost into planting beds to add nutrients and to help with water drainage. Gladiolus don't compete well with other plants or weeds, so for best results, keep the area around them open.

Planting and Care:

Depending on temperature, Gladiolus will take 70 to 90 days from planting until flowering. For a continual harvest, plant corms in two-week intervals through early summer. Plant corms 2-6" deep, depending on their size, and cover with 2"-4" of soil. Space corms 5" apart in rows or groups of 10-15 corms.

Once the plants are about 6 inches high, hill up the soil around the base of the plant to help support the stem. Keep the plants weed-free and mulched with a 2"-4" thick layer of bark mulch, wood shavings or straw. Keep plants well-watered to produce the largest flowers.

Tall varieties will benefit from staking to prevent the flower spikes from bending or breaking in the wind. Although hilling the soil will help, staking the single flower spikes or creating a grid with stakes and string are the best ways to keep flower stalks upright. Single stem supports are ideal.

Harvest

If growing for cut flowers, gladiolus should be cut at an angle when the lowest flowers on the stalk begin to show color. Immerse the cut end of the flower spike in water immediately after cutting.

Storage

Most gladiolus varieties are only winter hardy to USDA zone 7; one exception being the hardy gladiolus variety, (*Gladiolus nanus*). This type of gladiolus features 20" tall plants from corms that are winter hardy to USDA zone 5. They can be planted in the Fall or in the Spring.

In USDA zones 7 and 8, mulch gladiolus beds with a layer of hay or straw for winter protection. In USDA zones 5 and 6 areas, except for the hardy gladiolus varieties, dig up the corms for winter storage before the first frost if you plan to reuse them.

If you have cut the gladiolus blooms all the way to the ground, they will not likely not produce a healthy bloom the following year. It is our recommendation to use fresh corms every year for optimal quality.