

By David Lott

UNL Extension Educator

Not all flowering and foliage bulbs, corms, tubers and roots are going to overwinter here in west central Nebraska. While many gardens have planted tulips, daffodils, crocus and hyacinth this fall, it is time to dig up cannas, dahlias, calla lilies, caladium and other non-hardy bulbs and bulb-like structures for the winter and store them to be planted next spring.

Here are some simple tips to help dig up, clean, cure and store these non-hardy bulbs, corms, tubers and roots for the winter.

- Allow extra space around and under the desired plant to remove as much of the root system along with the bulb, bulb-like structure or root. Cut back extra foliage a couple of inches above the bulb or bulb-like structure with a clean knife.
- Gently remove the soil with a soft brush and a gentle stream of water. Discard damaged or diseased sections to avoid the spread of bacterial rot with a clean, sharp knife. After the washed plant material has dried, any remaining soil and debris can be removed.
- Store cleaned plant material in a single layer in a dry, well ventilated place away from direct sunlight and wind. The optimal temperature for curing is between 60 and 70 degrees Fahrenheit. Most of the bulbs and bulb-like structures will take three days to cure. Gladiolus corms need to cure for about three weeks, and the old corms need to be removed.
- Inspect all dried and cured plant material before storing. Dust the material with an insecticide-fungicide mix that is labeled for these non-hardy bulbs and bulb-like structures.
- Before storing for the winter, plan to create some kind of identification for the plant material that will be stored so it can be identified correctly in the spring. Plastic tags or taped labels on the containers marked with a permanent marker will help the identification process in the spring.
- Many of these bulbs or bulb-like structures can be stored in containers containing vermiculite, peat moss, perlite, or shredded paper. Choose a container that will allow some air circulation. Store the containers in a place that will stay between 40 and 50 degrees Fahrenheit during the winter. Avoid storage locations that might dry out this plant material in their protected container.
- Periodically check the stored plant material during the winter and cover them back up again. Remove any soft, rotten, or diseased plant material.

For any questions about digging and storing non-hardy bulbs and bulb structures, contact me at david.lott@unl.edu or by contacting your local University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension Office.