

Forcing tulips is a cool idea

Tulips can be grown indoors in pots. It's a fun project! You'll have a chance to enjoy the bright colors of spring months ahead of time.

Getting bulbs to bloom indoors is a process we call *forcing*. It means that we are forcing the bulbs to bloom under unnatural conditions.

Start by selecting the finest, biggest bulbs you can find. Look for bulbs that are specifically labeled for indoor forcing.

Partially fill the pots with potting soil and set bulbs no more than two inches apart. Fill the pot with soil so that the tips of the bulbs are exposed at the soil surface.

Each tulip bulb has a curved side and a flat side. The largest leaves grow from the flat side so place this side of the bulb against the outer rim of the pot. In this way the large leaves will arch over the rim of the pot and give you an attractive potted plant.

The bulbs need to be kept at around 40 degrees; they cannot

dry out or freeze. A basement refrigerator or cool cellar is suitable. Pots can be placed in perforated plastic bags to reduce moisture loss (and prevent dirt from dropping in your food in the refrigerator).

After 14–15 weeks, begin taking the pots out of their cold treatment. Most gardeners take out only one or two pots per week so they can enjoy the blooms over an extended period. DG

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Published November 2009
Revised October 2011