

Tips for Growing Hyacinths For Exhibition

includes the 'plunge method'

1. Choose firm, top size bulbs. Early to mid season varieties are most suitable for the show dates in March and April. The mould found on some bulbs, especially on white varieties, is not detrimental to the final performance.
2. Pots should be of a size that will accommodate the bulbs without them touching one another or the sides of the pot e.g. 5 hyacinths will require a pot size 17cm-20cm (7-8 inches) in diameter. 3 hyacinths will require a 12.5cm -15cm (5-6") pot.
3. John Innes No 3 or multipurpose compost is suitable. I use peat based compost using the formula on the Chempak Base fertiliser pack. To 18 litres of compost add 5-7 litres of sifted loam. This prevents drying out and helps to retain moisture and adds a little extra weight.
4. Remove the bulblets from the mother bulb. Using clean pots place 4cm (1.5") to 7.5cm (3") depth of compost in the pot adding a light dusting of bone meal and stir well. Level off the surface and place the bulbs, evenly on the compost. Placing bulbs on the compost is important to the end result. Exhibition bulbs are grown as naturally as possible in pots, so the bulbs should be covered with compost to a depth of twice their height. Fill pots to within 4cm (1½") of the top. Label and water thoroughly.
I used to plunge the pots in a trench, but found that they were difficult to remove from the ground in February. The pot also used to chip and crack especially after a severe winter. I now grow them in a cold frame using dry leaves to plunge them. I put a layer of leaves at the base of the cold frame and place the pots on this. I scatter a few slug pellets on and around the pots and then completely cover the pots with leaves pushing them well down between the pots. I do this in the last week of October or the first week in November.
5. Pots of bulbs can be removed from the plunge at the beginning of February. Bring them gradually into full light and keep them cool.

These details were originally written by Meryl Burgess, our late member, in whose memory the Meryl Burgess Salver was donated by her family.

