

How to Grow Camassia Quamash from Bulbs or Seeds

Tips for Growing Camassia Quamash Plants

By: R. Renée Bembry

Camassia Quamash are edible bulbous perennial plants. New research may suggest that they belong to the Agavaceae family rather than the Liliaceae family as previously believed. Quamash bloom from early spring to late summer. They are mostly native to North American marshes, fields, and meadows. Several deep blue clusters of loose flowers unfold atop stems of these plants that usually reach one to two feet tall. The flowers are six-point star-shaped and the leaves are almost grass-like.

Growing camassia quamash requires bulb planting techniques which basically consist of soil consistency, planting depth, bulb placement direction, watering, and back cutting following blooming season.

Planting Soil

Although quamash thrive well under virtually any soil condition from sandy to loamy to clay, inserting these plants in heavy clay soils in out of the way places is best. Heavy soils keep the bulbs tight beneath the ground and insures their security for many years. This is important to quamash survival in that the bulbs reproduce themselves. Planting bulbs in areas unlikely to be dug up later on prevents accidental digging where underground bulbs cannot be seen. Soil conditions may be acid, basic, or neutral.

Choose Sunny Locations

Quamash bulbs should be planted in sunny to partly sunny locations. The best time to set quamash in the ground is during cool autumn weather. Planting during this time of year prevents premature rooting.

Bulb Spacing, Direction, Depth

Planting depth should be about four inches deep and spacing should be about six inches apart. Bulbs should be placed in the ground with pointy ends facing upward and root bearing ends mesh against the bottoms of holes. Providing liquid fertilizer can help ensure plants do not become nutrient deficient.

Watering Quamash Bulbs

It is important to maintain moisture aplenty while quamash bulbs are being established in order to prevent them from drying out. During dormant summer seasons, however, less watering will be required.

To Trim or Not To Trim Spent Flowers

Following blooming periods, gardeners generally remove spent flowers (dead petals) to keep flowered areas looking pristine. In the case of camassia quamash, however, it is a good idea to leave dead flowers on stems despite their wilting, drying appearance. As stated earlier, *quamash reproduce themselves when left undisturbed*. This reproduction is accomplished in small degrees by their offsetting bulbs; but more efficiently by their ability to reseed themselves with seed remains falling from their flowers.

Growing Camassia Quamash from Seeds

Camassia quamash may also be grown from seeds which is why it is a good idea to leave spent flowers on plants to encourage reproduction. Seed starting can be accomplished by sowing seeds directly to the ground or by first stratifying the

seeds. Stratifying is a process of preserving the seeds with moist vermiculite, sand, or some other sterile media and then keeping them in cool places such as refrigerators for long periods of time prior to planting. This is done to breakdown seed dormancy. As in most cases when sowing seeds directly to the ground moisture preciseness becomes vital to seed survival. It can take anywhere from one to six months for seeds to germinate depending on the cultivation process and climate. Stratified seeds that begin to root should be planted right away.