how to grow eucomis (pineapple flower)

There are few more magnificent bulbs for your summer and autumn garden than Eucomis. They look almost as good in seed as they do in full flower and so hold their own in the garden for a good three month stretch.

Planting in the garden

Dry bulbs are best started off in pots, then planted in the border once they are in active growth. Once they’re up and going, plant each bulb 30cm apart and at a depth of 15-25cm. They prefer a warm, sunny aspect – generally those plants in full sun will produce more flowers as a result – with fertile soil and plenty of water.

Cover the base of the planting hole with a few handfuls of grit until the hole is around 15cm deep. Then plant the bulb directly on the grit before backfilling with a mixture of soil and composted bark and a sprinkling of general-purpose organic food.

In pots and containers

Eucomis make superb feature plants in containers. Plant 3 bulbs into a pot 30cm (12in) across. Use a loam-based compost with extra grit added, ⅔ compost, ⅓ grit, making sure you have a pot deep enough to allow them to be planted at least 15cm deep. You’ll need to water when they’re growing at full tilt, best done in the evening. Container grown plants are best over wintered in a dry and frost-free environment.

Care and Maintenance

Eucomis are generally hardy down to around -6°C in well-drained conditions.

Plants in the border will require little watering. Feed with an organic fertiliser in early spring and occasionally add a weak tomato feed when watering in summer. They may require supporting. In late autumn, apply a thick mulch of bark over the plant. Old leaves and flower stems should be removed only once they turn yellow.

Eucomis are generally pest-free. Watch out for slugs as new leaves emerge which may not be till May.