

STORING TULIP BULBS FOR FORCING

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Many methods are used to store tulips after they are potted in the fall. The ideal situation is a walk-in cold storage unit. However, many years ago they were buried under sand out-of-doors. This often meant that the sand had to be thawed out, often with steam, before the bulbs could be brought into the greenhouse (Figure 1).

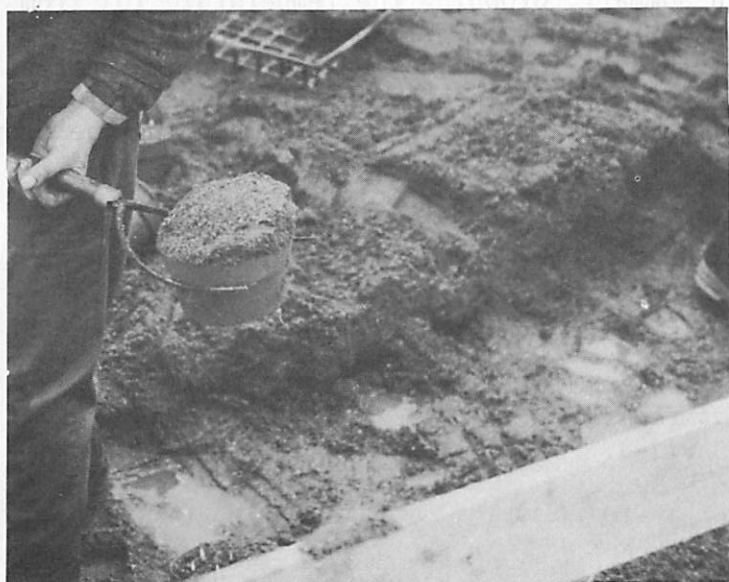


Figure 1. Digging bulbs stored in a cold frame under sand.

A few years ago another method was developed. This was placing the pots in cold frames and then covering them with styrofoam and a sheet of plastic (Figure 2). The purpose of this article is to describe another method that was tried and appeared to work well.

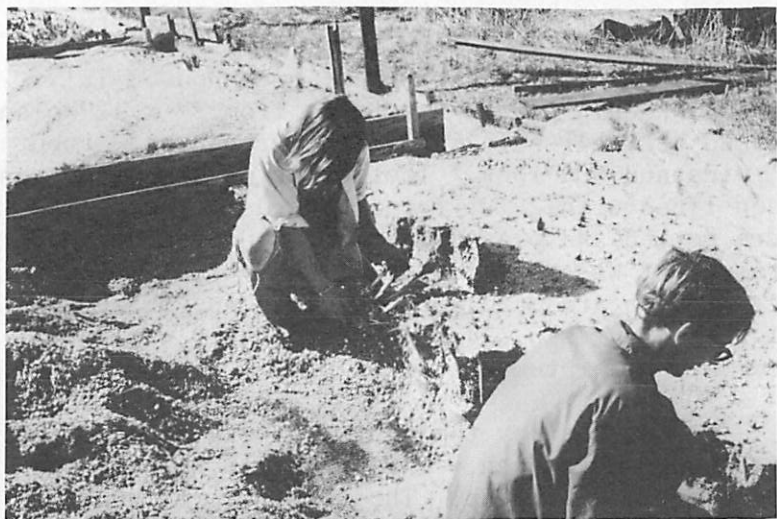


Figure 2. Tulips stored in cold frames and covered with shredded styrofoam with a plastic cover.

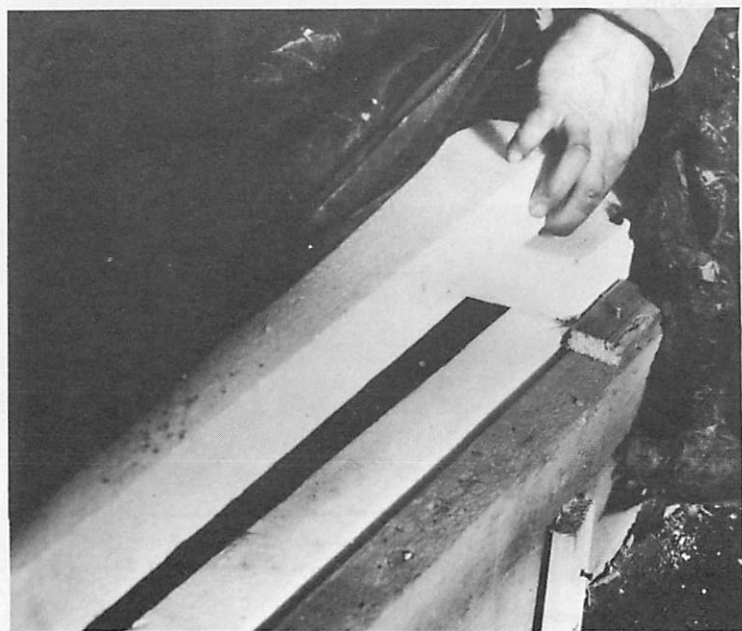


Figure 3. The frame inside a polyethylene greenhouse was lined and covered with 2" polystyrene boards, then covered with used mum shading cloth.

An unheated, polyethylene greenhouse, 15' x 96' was used. A frame was made from 2" x 12" planks placed on their edge inside the greenhouse, about 8' wide and 80' long. The inside of the frame was then lined with 2" styrofoam boards. The tulips were potted and placed on the ground inside the frame. It was then covered with 2" x 2' x 8' styrofoam boards and a black cloth (used shading cloth) (Figures 3 & 4). A thermometer was inserted to monitor temperatures.

During the day the doors on both ends of the greenhouse were open. This was done to keep the house from heating up. The temperatures under the styrofoam were about 40^oF during the day and 32^o at night. The tulips developed healthy roots and tops (Figure 5). About 5 weeks before Easter they were brought into the greenhouse and forced into flower.

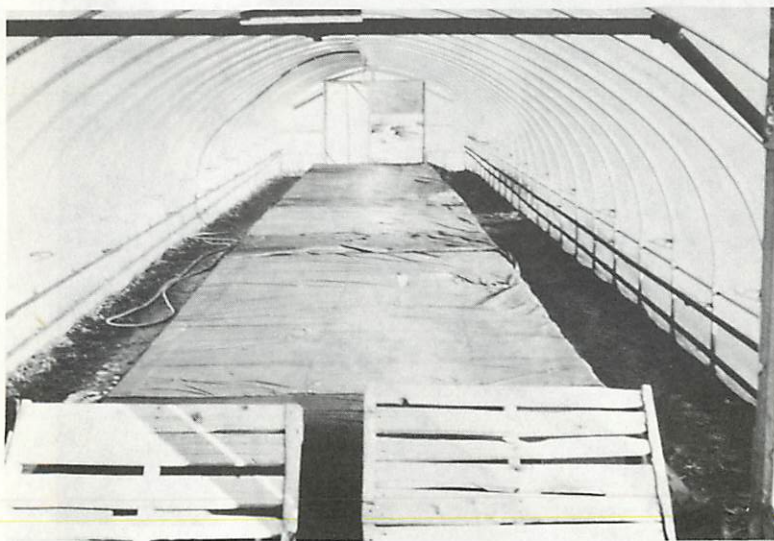


Figure 4. A bulb bed in a plastic greenhouse with styrofoam insulation. Note the open door on a bright day to avoid excessive heat.



Figure 5. Good top (and root) development on tulips after storage under styrofoam in a polyethylene house.