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Gardener's Supply donates 100,000 bulbs

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Gardener's Supply Co. donated 100,000 spring and summer bulbs to schools and community gardens this week after early predictions on sales left the company with a surplus.

Locally, 19,000 will be distributed.

As temperatures drop and the ground hardens, volunteers are rushing to work the soil and plant bulbs before the snow falls -- otherwise the bulbs will end up in a compost heap.

Michael Allan, director of Flower Power Fundraising at Gardner's Supply Co. was left with an abundance of bulbs once the economy took a dip this fall. Flower Power Fundraising helps organizations raise money by selling flower bulbs.

"When the economy went south a month ago, pocketbooks really tightened up, and our order size went down by 15 percent," Allan said. "Our early reading on the season took a turn and caught us. The product has been stored in Michigan, and I thought I can either throw it out or bring it here and help local businesses and schools with their gardens."

Allan distributed the bulbs to East Coast communities from Burlington to Winston-Salem, N.C. Allan entrusted Friends of Burlington Gardens to distribute about 19,000 bulbs to Burlington schools and neighborhood gardens this week.

On short notice Jim Flint, executive director of Friends of Burlington Gardens, contacted Burlington schools through the Burlington School Garden Council to enlist people to accept the donation and plant before Nov. 22.

"We're imposing a positive sense of urgency to get the bulbs in the ground so they can take root," Flint said. "Burlington High School has a nice diversity of bulbs; with 2,000 bulbs, they'll have a spectacular show of flowers next spring and summer."

Burlington High School students planted alliums, tulips, daffodils, star gazer lilies, crocuses and more Wednesday, digging deep in the soil with chilled fingers. Students maintain all the gardens on school grounds and took advantage of the donation immediately.

"This donation is excellent because one of our projects is to beautify school grounds," said Henri Sparks, director of student and families support services for the Burlington School District. "Friends of Burlington Gardens is a wonderful resource, and they show a true commitment to making sure donations get to schools, whether its flowers or vegetables."

Allan said the donation helps Gardener's Supply and Flower Power Fundraising fulfill their mission. "We created Flower Power Fundraising because we're looking to discover the next generation of gardeners. Who's going to get kids digging in the dirt when they're watching TV and playing video games?" Allan said.

"Selling bulbs as a fundraiser is a healthy, green alternative to candy bars and wrapping paper. It gives kids a chance to get back to nature. It's been very successful because it's a fundraiser that gives back to the community year after year with every season."
