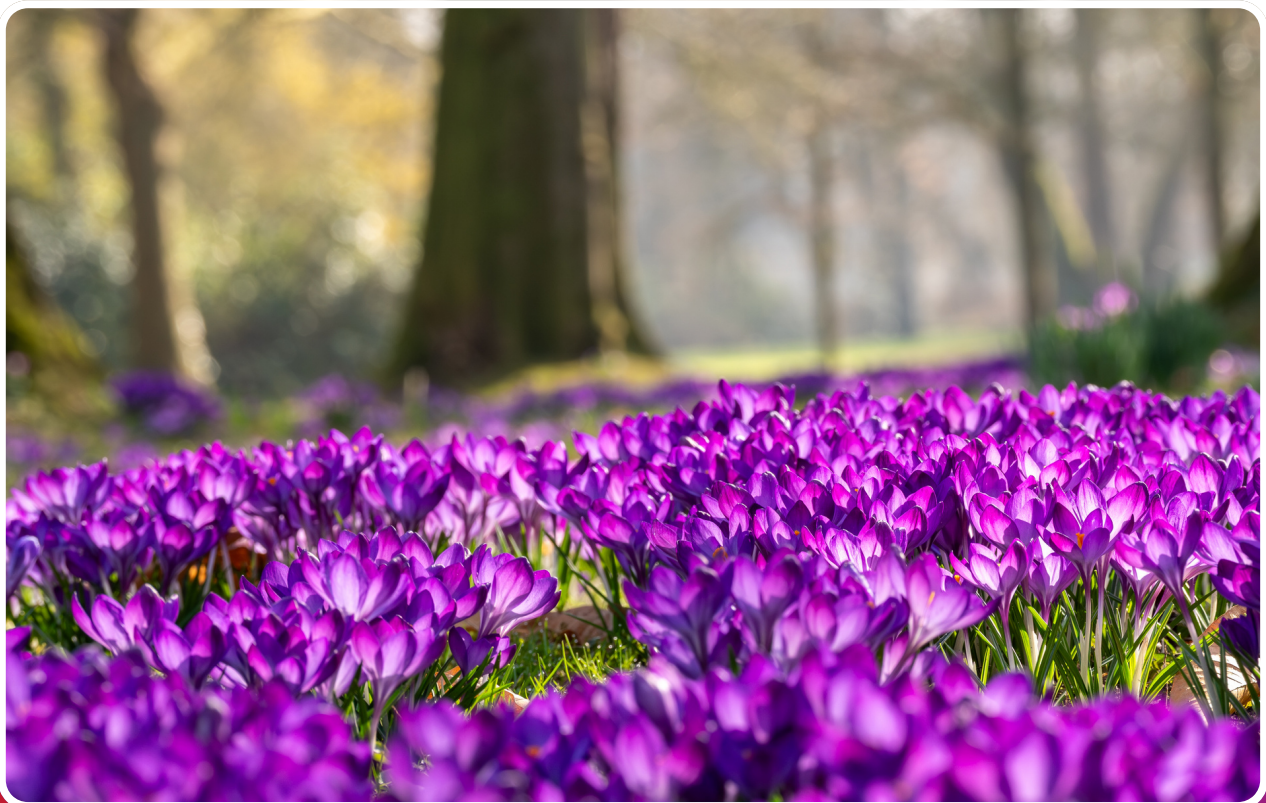




CROCUS PLANTING PROJECT GUIDE

This guide brings together the information you need to order your corms, plan your planting, involve your community, plant and care for the crocuses, create more ambitious displays, and make the most of the flowers when they bloom.



INTRODUCTION

Purple crocuses have become a familiar and very visible way for Rotary clubs and members to raise awareness of Rotary's role in the global effort to eradicate polio, involve their local communities and raise funds for End Polio Now.

Rotary members have found lots of ways to use the crocus corms creatively - from planting large displays and involving local groups to using planting and flowering events as part of wider fundraising and awareness activities.

This guide brings together the information you need to order your corms, plan your planting, involve your community, plant and care for the crocuses, create more ambitious displays such as a Rotary wheel or wording, and make the most of the flowers when they bloom.

For current information, resources and support, please contact the Rotary GB&I Polio Team on polio@rotarygbi.org.

WHY PURPLE?

Purple is the colour most closely associated with polio eradication. During mass vaccination campaigns, a child's little finger is marked with purple ink once they have received the polio vaccine, showing vaccination teams that the child has been immunised.

That is why the colour purple and the purple crocus have become such a strong symbol for Rotary's End Polio Now campaign — a simple, eye-catching way to start conversations and tell the Rotary polio story.



1. WHY PLANT PURPLE CROCUSES?

The purple crocus is a simple but effective way of starting conversations about polio and Rotary's role in the effort to eradicate it.

All Rotarians, clubs, hubs and districts can use their crocus activities in several ways:



RAISING AWARENESS

Planting and flowering events give us an opportunity to remind people about Rotary's long-standing commitment to a polio-free world.

The crocuses themselves attract attention, but the important part is telling people why they are there and making the connection between the purple flowers, Rotary and End Polio Now.

FUNDRAISING

Although the corms themselves are not primarily a fundraising activity, clubs have used them creatively to raise funds.

This could include offering small quantities of corms in return for a donation, planting them in pots to sell when they start to show, involving sponsors or using planting and flowering events as part of a wider End Polio Now fundraiser. You could also approach local organisations to sponsor part or all of a planting area.

You can encourage people to support End Polio Now at rotarygbi.org/donatepolio

ADVOCACY

Consider involving local politicians, dignitaries and other community leaders in your planting or flowering events.

Inviting them to take part gives you another opportunity to talk about polio eradication, Rotary's contribution and the importance of finishing the job – as well as your wider Rotary activities at home and overseas.

2. THE ROTARY - POLIO LINK

It was Rotary that first dared to dream of a polio-free world. Rotary has been there throughout and Rotary must be there at the end.

We need to continue reminding people of Rotary's pivotal role in the effort to achieve a polio-free world.

GETTING YOUR COMMUNITY INVOLVED

Almost any community group or volunteer can take part, with opportunities for people of all ages and abilities to get involved. There are opportunities for engagement throughout the process – when you are planning and ordering corms, when you plant them and again each year when they flower.

Crocus planting can be a particularly good way of making new connections with people and organisations who may not previously have worked with Rotary.

Think about involving:

- RotaKids, Interact and Rotaract
- schools, pre-schools, colleges, universities and youth organisations
- community gardening groups
- parks and gardens teams
- sports clubs, sports grounds and leisure centres
- places of worship
- residential homes
- hospitals and healthcare organisations
- visitor attractions
- country estates and public gardens
- roadside verges and roundabouts, where appropriate
- local businesses
- community and voluntary organisations

We encourage Rotarians to welcome approaches from community groups and volunteers such as seeking suggestions for possible planting sites as well as help with the planting. It could lead not only to support for polio activities, but also to new relationships, helpers and potential members.

Where possible, think beyond just the planting itself. Invite the people who helped plant the corms back when the flowers appear so that they can see the results.

3. ORDERING AND DELIVERY

Ordering arrangements are coordinated through Rotary districts.

Each district normally has a District Crocus Corm Coordinator responsible for coordinating orders, delivery and local distribution arrangements.



As ordering arrangements, prices and deadlines can change, Rotarians should always use the current information supplied for that year.

For current ordering details, forms, prices, deadlines and delivery information, contact your District Crocus Corm Coordinator or the Rotary GB&I Polio Team on polio@rotarygbi.org.

Orders generally open in the Spring and close during August, with corms delivered in September ready for planting in October and November and flowering in February or March depending on the weather and where and when they are planted.

Please follow all instructions provided with the current order form carefully.

Boxes of corms can be heavy, so take care when lifting and transporting them. A full box of 4,000 corms weighs approximately 16kg.

4. CHOOSING A SITE

The crocuses used for this activity, *Crocus tommasinianus* 'Ruby Giant', prefer a sunny position where soil does not become waterlogged in winter.

Some shade from deciduous trees is acceptable but avoid planting too close to tree trunks or beneath evergreen trees. They can also be planted in containers or pots.



Lawned areas and grass banks usually give very good results. However, the grass must be left unmown after the crocuses emerge until the leaves have died back naturally, so choose a site where slightly longer grass will not cause a problem.

It is also a good idea to give the area a final cut in late December, before the crocuses emerge, so that the flowers are not hidden by long grass when they appear. Try to avoid areas where people are likely to walk over the crocuses during the growing and flowering period.

For a more natural effect, spread the corms over a larger area. For a stronger block of colour, plant them more densely.

Crocuses should increase naturally over time, so the display should improve in future years. They can also work very well alongside early spring flowers like snowdrops.

SQUIRRELS AND WILDLIFE

Corms planted into cultivated soil or flower beds may attract squirrels and other rodents.

Make sure they are planted firmly at the recommended depth and that the ground is firmed down well afterwards.



Even then, you may occasionally lose some corms, but gaps can be replanted in future years.

5. PREPARATION FOR PLANTING

Store the corms in a dry place at around 17°C until you are ready to plant them.

A garage or garden shed can be suitable but protect the corms from mice and other rodents and keep them raised off the floor.

WHEN TO PLANT

Autumn is the usual planting period.

Many groups choose to arrange their planting around **World Polio Day on 24th October**, which can provide an excellent opportunity for publicity and community involvement.

There is no need for every planting to take place on or around World Polio Day, however. Choose a date that works for your club, hub or district – and your volunteers and the conditions.

PREPARING THE SITE

If you are planting into grass, mow it as short as possible beforehand.

If conditions are dry, give the area a good watering the day before planting so that the soil is easier to work with.



IMPORTANT SAFETY NOTICE

Note the crocus species is *Crocus tommasinianus* (Ruby Giant). Children should be supervised at all times and crocus corms should not be ingested. Crocus species are not toxic to people, however, if signs of sickness are seen medical advice should be sought immediately.

6. PLANTING THE CORMS

There are several ways of planting the corms:

WITH A SPADE

Slide the spade underneath the top of the turf to a depth of around 5–7.5 cm (2–3 inches).

Lift the turf enough to place the corms underneath. For a more formal display, place the corms where you want them. For a more natural appearance, scatter small groups of around 5–10 corms.

Lower the turf back into position and firm it down very well with your feet or a roller.



WITH A GARDEN FORK

Use a sturdy four-pronged garden fork to make planting holes. Push the fork about 10cm into the soil and gently move it to create holes large enough for the corms.

Make lines of holes approximately 20cm apart and stagger them so that the display looks natural. Push the corms into the holes to around 3-4cm deep.



AFTER PLANTING

Use a stiff broom to brush sand across the grass to fill the holes. Builder's sand can be used with a 20kg bag of sand normally sufficient for around 4,000 corms.

With a team of around five people, planting 4,000 corms should take approximately two hours at a fairly leisurely pace - including time for a well-earned tea break!

7. FEELING CREATIVE? TRY PLANTING DESIGNS

You do not have to plant the crocuses in a natural spread.

Some Rotary clubs have created very effective displays in the shape of the Rotary wheel or used the flowers to spell out words such as **ROTARY** or **END POLIO NOW**. The following approaches are based on successful Rotary plantings.

CREATING WORDS WITH CROCUSES

You could use the corms to create wording such as **ROTARY** or **END POLIO NOW**.

One successful planting used approximately 4,500 corms, with letters about 150cm high and planting channels around 15cm wide.

Plant densely enough to produce a strong display in the first year.

Check the display each year and replace any gaps caused by squirrels, birds or other wildlife during the next planting season.

CREATING A ROTARY WHEEL - APPROACH 1

A sunny, well-drained site, preferably with a slight slope, works particularly well.

You will need approximately **2,500 corms** for a wheel approximately 14 feet in diameter. This allows for 24 outer teeth approximately one foot square and spokes approximately one foot wide.

To mark out the design:

- use white lining paint;
- mark three concentric circles at approximately 14, 12 and 10 feet;
- mark the spokes and outer teeth;
- remove the turf or ground from the areas to be planted to around 4 inches deep;
- plant the corms densely — the original planting used approximately 36–40 corms per square foot;
- replace the turf carefully and firm it down very well with your feet or a roller.

The alternative areas of the design can also be planted at a lower density if you want a different effect.

CREATING A ROTARY WHEEL - APPROACH 2

Another successful method would use approximately 3,500 corms for the circle and a further 500 for the spokes.

Useful equipment includes:

- a spade
- string
- a strong central stake
- smaller canes or markers
- a suitable knife or turf-cutting tool
- a straight wooden board.

Place a strong stake in the centre of the area and use string to mark the inner and outer circles.

Cut through the turf and remove it carefully in manageable sections, keeping the pieces in order so that they can be replaced afterwards.

Loosen the soil underneath to a depth of around 7.5–10 cm (3–4 inches), scatter the crocus corms and replace the turf.

Firm the turf down very well.

Then mark the spokes at 60-degree intervals.

Use a straight board or other guide to mark the trenches for the spokes, remove the turf and plant the corms in the same way.

When you have finished:

- remove all stakes and markers;
- rake over any loose soil;
- firm the area;
- add suitable signage before the flowers appear

8. SIGNAGE

Good signage is important. Hopefully the purple flowers will attract attention each year and people need to understand why Rotary planted them and what they represent.

Where possible, place an attractive, clear sign alongside the planting when the crocuses are in flower.



An editable [Rotary planting sign template](#) is available for download. Although groups are free to use their local sign manufacturer, Rotary GB&I's recommended supplier of signage is [Kaleidoscope Imaging Ltd](#). They can also add club, group and/or district details to the sign at no extra cost.

Consider what banners, pullups, brochures, posters etc. you want to have available at your event(s). Take a look at the materials available to order from the [Rotary GB&I Online Shop](#) and the [Rotary Club of Guernsey's End Polio Now Shop](#).

Where planting has been carried out with another organisation, include their details on the signage where appropriate and be sure to invite them to come and celebrate when they are in bloom.

9. PHOTOGRAPHY AND PUBLICITY

Take plenty of good photographs and video clips - both while the planting is taking place and again when the crocuses are in flower.

Action photographs showing people getting involved are usually much more engaging than photographs of people simply standing in a line.

Make sure everyone who appears in photographs - and parents or responsible adults where appropriate - is happy for the images to be used.

They may be used by Rotary, in local media, online or on social media, so appropriate permissions are important. For more information, visit our [Compliance section](#).

Tell your local media what you are doing, during planting time and again when the flowers appear. Where appropriate, include information about how people can get involved, find out more about Rotary or support End Polio Now.

When the crocuses are in bloom, try to photograph them on a sunny day when the flowers are fully open. They are much more impressive than on a dull day.

Invite the people who helped with the planting back to see the results. You could turn this into a small celebration or awareness event and encourage them to get involved again.



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10. AFTERCARE

Once planted, the crocuses should be relatively straightforward to look after.

For crocuses planted in grass, give the area a final mow in late December before the plants start to emerge and then avoid mowing again until the leaves have completely died back after flowering.

Once the flowers have finished, do not cut off the leaves.

Allow them to die back naturally, as this helps feed the corms and improves the display in future years.

Do not use lawn weedkillers while the crocus leaves are visible.

Applying a top dressing after flowering can also help the new corms establish for the following year.

While the flowers are in bloom:

- make sure your signage is in place;
- take more photographs and video clips;
- share on your social media and tell your local media;
- invite planting volunteers back to see the results;
- use the opportunity to tell the End Polio Now story.

11. QUESTIONS AND KEY CONTACTS

For current information, resources, templates and further help, please contact the: Rotary GB&I Polio Team on polio@rotarygbi.org.

For local ordering and delivery arrangements, please contact your District Crocus Corm Coordinator.