



## GRAPE HYACINTH: AN UNEXPLORED PERENNIAL BULBOUS CROP

**Shwetha U. N.**

Ph.D. Research Scholar, Division of Floriculture and Landscaping  
ICAR – Indian Agricultural Research Institute, Pusa, New Delhi, India – 110012

### How to Cite this article

Shwetha 2024. GRAPE HYACINTH: AN UNEXPLORED PERENNIAL BULBOUS CROP. *Sabujeema-An International Multidisciplinary e-Magazine*. 4(7): 45-47



**Open Access**

### Introduction

Grape hyacinth (*Muscari armeniacum*) is a perennial bulb that blooms in the middle of spring and produces spikes of thick, urn-shaped flowers that are usually blue. The petite, bell-shaped, cobalt-blue blooms of grape hyacinths, which resemble clusters of upside-down grapes, are what gave rise to its name. It isn't a real hyacinth. The genus name, *Muscari*, refers to the aroma that many of the flowers in the genus generate, and is derived from the Greek word for musk. *Muscari* originated in the Old World, which included the Mediterranean basin, central and southern Europe, Northern Africa, Western, Central, and South-Western Asia. In other places, such as Northern Europe and the US, it has attained naturalization. The genus was once assigned to the tribe Hyacintheae of the Liliaceae, but it is now classified in the Asparagaceae family, subfamily Scilloideae.



Source:

<https://plants.gertens.com/12070009/Plant/2855/Grape-Hyacinth/>

### Plant Morphology

Grape hyacinth plants normally have one or more long, thin leaves that sprout from an underground bulb. After flowering in early summer, the foliage fades back, but unlike many other spring-blooming bulbs, it



resumes active growth in mid-fall and survives moderate winters. One to three 4–8" tall flower stalks with 20–40 closely spaced blooms per stalk are produced by each bulb. Some types of flowers have a musky smell, and the blooms develop in the

spring as a spike or raceme that is held in a tight or loose spiral around a central stem. As the flower ages, the petals frequently grow less closely spaced. The hue of the blossom can range from a light blue to a very dark blue - almost black in certain instances (albino forms are also known)

Certain plants may have different-colored or shaped upper and lower blooms. Six fused tepals make each individual flower, giving it a spherical to oblong shape. The tepals are constricted at the end to form a mouth, where the ends of the tepals appear as tiny lobes or teeth. The tips of the tepals may differ in colour from the remainder of the tepal. Dense clusters of urn-shaped blue, white, yellow, or pink flowers are borne at the apex of a leafless flower stalk in the majority of the genus' species. The lowest flowers in the inflorescence wither as the upper ones open, and the flowers open in a sequential order from the bottom up. Capsulated fruit and tripartite seed pods appear after pollinated flowers. They quickly become naturalized, proliferating by self-seeding and division, and in some circumstances, they may even turn invasive.

#### Uses

Planting grape hyacinths along walks and paths, in front of beds and borders, or in rock gardens is a great idea. They are a popular container plant and blend nicely with other early flowering bulbs. They look especially good when left to naturally occur beneath trees and bushes, where they appear best in masses in loose drifts. They work well for forcing inside and make beautiful cut blooms.

*M. armeniacum* possesses antioxidant, antimutagenic activity, and specific glycosidase inhibitory activity; it can be used for the production of potential anticancer, antiviral, antidiabetic, and anti-obesity drugs.

#### Cultivation and After care

Although grape hyacinths thrive in almost all soil types except the soggiest, they are particularly fond of slightly sandy soil that is acid to neutral and not too rich. For optimal

vitality, place in direct sunlight. On the other hand, blossoms in partial shade endure longer.



Typically grown in lawns, borders, rock gardens, and containers, they are naturally found in forests or meadows. Plant the bulbs in the autumn, spacing them 2 inches apart and 3-4 inches deep. Bone meal used during planting and after flowering is beneficial to the plants. In the summer, they only need sunlight or some shade, not much watering, or feeding. Once the foliage starts to fall back, watering should be reduced. It's crucial to properly prepare the soil before planting bulbs. Bulb gardening requires well-drained soil. If there is a lot of clay in the soil, you might want to add some coco peat. Think about the amount of sunshine needed, not the kind of lightbulb you select. Certain plants need a semi-shaded spot beneath a tree, while others could need direct sunshine.

There is a famous planting of grape hyacinth at Keukenhof Gardens in The Netherlands known as the Blue River. This dense planting of *M. armeniacum* winds past trees, shrubs, and other spring flowers, giving the illusion of a flowing blue river.



When planting spring bulbs, it's generally recommended to plant two to three times as deeply as the bulbs are tall. This implies that smaller bulbs will be planted 3-4 inches deep, while most large bulbs, like tulips or daffodils, will be planted around 8 inches deep. Measurement of planting depth begins at the bulb's base.

#### **Different species and cultivars**

Various species of the genus *Muscari* are as follows;

*M. azureum*: It Has bright blue flowers that open more widely than *M. armeniacum*. This is tall and blooms in early spring. *M. azureum* alba has white flowers.

*M. comosum*: Also known as Tassel hyacinth that blooms in late spring, with purplish brown flowers

*M. latifolium*: This produces a single leaf from each bulb. It blooms in early spring with bi-colored flowers clusters that have pale blue florets on top and are dark blue-black on the bottom.

*M. plumosum*: It is also known as Feather hyacinth and has sterile and threadlike purple-blue flowers that create the appearance of a feathery plume.

Different varieties of the species *M. armeniacum* are as follows;

- **Album**: A fragrant, white-flowered selection that is not as vigorous as the standard type.
- **Blue Spike**: Flax blue flowers with double florets on branched flower spikes.
- **Carneum**: Pinkish flowers.
- **Cantab**: Sky blue, slightly fragrant flowers and blooms slightly later than the standard type.
- **Fantasy Creation**: Double blue flowers that may develop green overtones as the flowers age.

- **Saffier**: Deep blue flowers that are long lasting than most varieties because they are sterile.
- **Superstar**: Densely packed periwinkle-blue florets edged in white, topped with a cap of paler florets.

#### **Conclusion**

There are number of ornamental plants that remained unnoticed and one among them is grape hyacinth, which is a lesser-known bulb crop in India that bears attractive blue flowers resembling grape bunches. The different species of grape hyacinth can be used for creating a beautiful aesthetic environment in and around houses and also in public places. As it is poorly known flower its cultivation needs to be standardized for potential use.