



1 Meadow tapestry

The lady tulip, *Tulipa clusiana*, is a small species tulip grown in Britain since the 17th century. Species tulips often naturalise easily and many are perfectly adapted to growing in the long grass of a meadow or orchard, where they can be left undisturbed.



1: STEFANO MARINAZ; 2, 3 & 5: BRITT WILLOUGHBY DYER; 4: KRISTY RAVAGE

2 Flame-thrower
Another small-growing species tulip that looks ravishing when grown jewel-like in grass and left to naturalise is the horned tulip, *T. acuminata*, with delicate spidery flowers and twisted, flame-coloured petals. Plant in a sheltered spot, away from wind.

3 Drama queens
The glossy, deep plum-coloured flowers of *Tulipa* 'Recreado' stand 50cm high. This is a robust, reliable and long-flowering May tulip. Orange *T.* 'Ballerina' makes a dramatic contrast in the background.

4 The red & the green
I love the magical effect of red tulips in long grass, as seen here at Cranborne Manor in Dorset. No other colour works as well. They are beautiful too when combined with cow parsley. Plant the bulbs sparsely and, re-plant from year to year.

5 Colour kaleidoscope
Fantastic stripes and swirls of colour characterise Rembrandt tulips and give them rarity value. The variations are the result of a benign virus that separates colours without harming the bulb. This one is *T.* 'The Lizard'.



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Tulips

As the traditional bulb-planting season arrives, what's the secret to creating spectacular spring displays of tulips?

WORDS ARNE MAYNARD

6 Seasonal containers

A big pot crammed with *Tulipa* 'Christmas Sweet', a tall early tulip that I underplant with *Hyacinthus orientalis* 'Woodstock'. Pots give a display that can span four weeks, with the dark-coloured hyacinths opening first and giving way to the pale pink tulips.



6

7 Ruffled feathers

Flamboyant *Tulipa* 'Black Parrot' is among the most glamorous and exotic of the late-flowering tulips, with ruffled petals in a deep sultry purple. They're planted here in a generous swathe along a wall, with later single-flowered tulips yet to open.



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8 Successional planting

Crimson *Tulipa* 'Jan Reus' with earlier-flowering *Hyacinthus orientalis* 'Ibis' and later *Allium hollandicum* 'Purple Sensation'. After flowering, I recycle hyacinth bulbs, planting them out in the kitchen garden, where it doesn't matter that they'll come back looking smaller and sparser.



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6, 8, 9 & 10 BRITT WILLOUGHBY-DYER; 7 KRISTY RAMAGE

9 Box of delights
Tulipa 'Rems Favourite' has gorgeous streaks and blotches, probably the result of a virus. Flowers like this have curiosity value and need to be grown somewhere they can be seen close up. It's lovely to have pots and pans of bulbs planted up on a table that can be seen from inside the house.

10 Waking the border
Threading tulips through an herbaceous border brings early-season interest before the main season gets going. A sophisticated colour pairing of *T.* 'Spring Green' and *T.* 'Queen of Night' will be succeeded by the all-black, double-flowered 'Black Hero'.

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It is always exciting to come back to the bulb catalogues when I have been away for the summer, and I am drawn to the tulips because there are so many different types and colour variations, from the really whizzy to the very subtle, and so many different ways of planting them.

I buy tulips in big quantities and because I prefer to leave the bulbs in the ground, I try to choose just one or two cultivars that I know I will use year after year. Tulip bulbs are generally not long-lasting, so I plant them close together in large numbers and then top up the number of bulbs each year, treating them a bit like annuals.

One of the ways I like to use tulips in the garden is to thread them through herbaceous borders as a way of extending the season.

In one of my favourite combinations (see number 10, opposite), 'Spring Green' flowers first with 'Queen of Night'. Then as these two fade, 'Black Hero' emerges, taller and with big, double blooms. Over three or four weeks the display gradually changes from ivory and black to entirely black. This is also a good combination for pots, with the bulbs planted in layers: 'Black Hero' is planted beneath 'Queen of Night'. A lovely, earlier bulb to plant in with them is the two-toned blue and purple *Muscari latifolium*.

Tulips can look very contemporary and I like to use the green-streaked, pink and white *Viridiflora* tulips together. I also like to link the borders with containers, so, if a border is predominantly planted with white *viridifloras* and fewer black tulips, I'll reverse it in the pots and have more black than white. Another container association I love and use a lot is palest pink tulip 'Christmas Sweet' underplanted with *Hyacinthus orientalis* 'Woodstock', which is a gorgeous beetroot colour and one of the oldest cultivars (see number 6, opposite page).

After they've finished flowering, I'll sometimes plant tulip bulbs out in a meadow, and

some will come up and some won't. I also experiment with new tulip cultivars and colours, by growing them in pots to see how they do. This means that I've always got pots that I can use to fill spaces beside my front door, or bring inside.

I absolutely love the species tulips and I grow some in pots on a table behind the house – that's my cabinet of curiosities. This year I planted *T. clusiana* in my meadow. It's a lovely white and pink candy-striped flower that will naturalise over time. There is also *T. clusiana* 'Lady Jane', whose petals recurve as the flowers age; I have planted it in my knot garden for its Elizabethan feel. □
NEXT MONTH Nutteries.