

Flora & Fauna

Time for Tulips

It's amazing to think that the silky petals and vibrant colors of the tulip flower come from a very plain-looking brown bulb. For years, centuries in fact, tulips have been revered for their simple grace and colorful beauty. In order to enjoy tulips in your garden next spring, the time to plant them is this fall. Here are some tips for selecting and planting tulips:

When to Plant

Tulips require a cold spell in order to produce large blooms, so they should be planted before the first frost. Depending on your zone, this could be anywhere from September-January. Some warmer zones may need to refrigerate bulbs for 6 to 8 weeks before planting.

Succession Planting

It's a good idea to plant a few tulip varieties that bloom at different points in the season, so you can enjoy these flowers all spring and into the summer. Look for markers such as "E" for early, "M" for midseason, and "L" for late in your garden catalog.

The first to bloom typically are the Species Tulips. They thrive around rocks or along stone walkways. They also come in a variety of heights from 6 inches to as tall as 15, so look for markers such as "D" for dwarf, "M" for medium, and "T" for tall in your garden catalog.

The next blooming varieties are the Single and Double Earlies. Lastly, a rush of colors will come from the Darwin, Lily-flowered, Cottage, Breeder, Late Double, and Parrot varieties.

How to plant

The rule is to plant tulips with the pointed end up and six inches deep (meaning 4 inches of soil above the top of the bulb). Tulips in warmer zones should be planted 8 inches deep. Those extra 2 inches of soil will help keep the bulb cooler in milder winters.

Space individual bulbs about 5 inches apart. You'll be able to fit about 5 tulips per square foot, or 250 bulbs per 50 square feet.

If you want to use a fertilizer, choose a low-nitrogen granular formula specially formulated for bulbs.

Did you know?

Tulips were so popular in 1637 in Holland that they were the subject of a market frenzy known as "tulip mania." Tulips were valued so highly that people sold their homes and farms for the chance of owning even just a handful of bulbs. Unfortunately, tulips were highly overpriced and the market for them crashed, bankrupting many merchants. The term "tulip mania" is still used today to refer to any large economic bubble when asset prices significantly deviate from their actual value.

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Cleaning Corner:

Wood Furniture Care Basics

Wood furniture comes in all shapes, sizes, wood types, and finishes. In order to preserve the beauty of your furniture, keep the following basic care tips in mind:

- Avoid excessive dampness, dryness, heat, or cold. All of these can cause damage and warping
- Avoid direct sunlight, which can change the color
- Wipe up spills at once to prevent spots that will require refinishing later
- Rubber or plastic mats should not be used unless marked safe for wood, since some may soften or stain the finish
- Polish furniture no more than 3-4 times a year unless it gets heavy use. Use a polish specifically recommended for the kind of finish on your furniture
- Protect the top of furniture by placing felt under decorative objects that could scratch the surface when moved

September

- 1715 King Louis XIV of France dies after a reign of 72 years, the longest of any major European monarch
- 1878 Emma Nutt of Boston, MA, becomes the first female telephone operator
- 1926 Henry Ford announces the 8-hour work day and 5-day work week
- 1928 Sir Alexander Fleming notices a bacteria-killing mold growing in his laboratory, discovering what later became known as penicillin
- 1981 Sandra Day O'Connor is sworn in as first female Supreme Court justice
- 2007 Halo 3, the third and final installment of the Halo video game series, is released, netting over \$170,000,000 within 24 hours of its midnight launch, a record for the highest first-day revenue ever earned in entertainment history.

Health Advice: Hold on to Healthy Hands

We depend on our hands a great deal more than we realize. We need them to scratch a tiny itch on the tip of our nose or to hoist heavy grocery bags out of the car, to wield tools and comfort our children. It's amazing to think that these strong yet delicate instruments are each constructed of 27 little bones, overlaid with a webbing of tendons and nerves, supported by muscle, and covered in flexible skin. Because of their complexity, and because we use them nearly all day every day, they are susceptible to injury and illness. This is increasingly so as we reach or pass middle age. Women are especially prone to developing conditions such as arthritis, tendinitis, and carpal tunnel syndrome. Luckily, most problems can be fixed or at least managed by modern medicine.

Here are three of the most common hand health issues and how they can be best treated:

- **Fractures** can happen in any number of ways. Broken wrists generally occur in women over 50 when they use a hand to break a fall. Men are more susceptible to fracturing the distal radius (the lower end of the arm bone on the thumb side). Children tend to present with broken fingers after they've been accidentally slammed in car doors and windows. **Treatment:** Because the bones in the hand are small, it is often not enough to apply a splint to broken ones. Sometimes a surgeon must go under the skin to attach pins, wires, plates, or screws to set the bones properly.
- **Arthritis** is a painful but very ordinary condition of the joints that occurs when the smooth cartilage, which usually acts as a shock absorber at the ends of bones, wears down so that there's more friction on the bones. This can cause the joints to swell and hurt, making it difficult for them to move properly. **Treatment:** Arthritis can be treated with anti-inflammatory medications and sometimes with splints that keep people from using the joints during flare-ups. Surgery can be an option in some cases, too.
- **Carpal tunnel syndrome** presents with numbness and tingling in the thumb, which then spreads to the middle and ring fingers. Contrary to popular belief, carpal tunnel is not caused by computer use; however, working on a computer keyboard can be painful for people who have the condition. Carpal tunnel syndrome occurs when a nerve in the hand becomes pinched. Carpal tunnel is affects women three times as often as men. **Treatment:** Physical therapists use massage to ease the pain, and doctors sometimes prescribe a wrist brace to rest the hand. Cortisone injections are also effective for many people.

Kid Corner: Valuing What Really Counts

In the fall of 2008, the average amount spent by parents on school clothes and shoes for their teen was \$1,085. Today's celebrity-obsessed, media-intensive culture focuses predominantly on appearance and possessions. Teens are constantly bombarded with the message that power and fame go hand in hand with expensive clothes and luxury cars. Since families everywhere are trying to minimize costs, it's more important than ever to teach your children that they don't need high-priced items to feel good about themselves.

Here are a few tips to help your teen combat consumerism:

1. **Pressure Source 1: Friends.** Most teens feel extreme pressure to buy the latest "in" thing because that's exactly what they see their friends doing. Without the newest clothes and accessories, they worry about fitting in and being accepted. But you've got to give your teen a reality check and tell him that comparing himself to others is impractical because someone out there will always have more (and, of course, less). Help him focus on his talents and develop confidence in who he is, not what he wears. Kids who are genuinely happy with themselves generally don't feel like they have to fit in at any cost.
2. **Pressure Source 2: Themselves.** For some teens, their main focus is not blending in with their friends, it's standing out and declaring their individuality. They become especially drawn to personalized items or products that allow them to show support for a cause, a style of music, or particular fashion style. Support your teen's need for individuality by taking an interest in hobbies that don't involve a lot of spending, such as vegetarian cooking, gardening, or a favorite new band. Applaud your teen when he makes choices that aren't motivated by materialism. But if he insists on expressing himself through clothing, help him set a budget and shop at thrift stores or chains like Target and Kohl's that feature low-budget lines by big-name designers.
3. **Pressure Source 3: You.** Over the past few years, parents may have inadvertently promoted consumerism by buying things for their kids to win cool points, to avoid disappointing them, to impress other parents, or to assuage guilt of a divorce or hectic work schedule. So if you do decide to buy your teen something, make sure it comes with a positive message like, "These headphones are in recognition of raising your math grade. You worked very hard and I'm proud of you." Presenting your children with gifts "just because" winds up giving them a sense of entitlement.
4. **Pressure Source 4: The World.** Most kids don't stop and think about the commercials and advertisements they see on TV or in magazines. So take a moment to point out the different techniques marketers use to entice kids. Finally, help your teen appreciate what she has by helping people in need. The idea of paying \$200 for a phone or pair of jeans will seem ridiculous after seeing the difference the money could make in the life of a homeless person.

Just about every parent hears the same thing when their child gets home from school, "I'm hungry!" Instead of letting your child rummage through the pantry for unhealthy chips and junk food before dinner, serve up one of these quick and easy healthy snacks.

- A microwave-baked sweet potato topped with salsa and low-fat cheese
- A fruit smoothie (whirl low-fat yogurt and fruit in a blender)
- Ready-made hummus (chickpea dip) spread inside whole-wheat pita pockets
- Ants on a log (fill celery sticks with peanut butter and top with raisins)
- Apple or pear slices and a scoop of low-fat cottage cheese
- A cup of whole grain cereal with low-fat milk and strawberry slices
- Fruit and cheese kebobs (alternate slices of fruit like apples, grapes, and strawberries with low-fat cheese cubes)
- Cucumber slices tossed with Italian dressing
- Carrot sticks with light Ranch dressing

These snacks are good for your child and good for you, too! So go ahead and make some extra servings and treat yourself!

Snack Facts

- Munching on just one carrot will meet your vitamin A needs for the entire day
- Preschoolers get nearly one third of their energy from snacks
- Snacking is on the rise: 75 percent of us eat at least one snack a day
- A planned snack can help prevent overeating
- Television watching tends to increase snacking, particularly on high-fat, high-calorie foods

Work Area Organization Tips

Whether you work downtown, have a home office, or just sit at the kitchen table to pay bills once a month, organization is key for conducting efficient business. Here are some tips for organizing whatever work area you use.

The Downtown Office

For most people, your furniture and storage cabinets have been provided for you, so make good use of them. Establish three primary activity centers 1) work area – where you spend most of your time, 2) reference area – where you'll store the books, binders, and manuals you'll need on occasion, and 3) supplies such as pens, paper, etc. **Tip:** Store papers associated with ongoing projects in an area that is easily accessible and within your view. It will make it easier to stay on task (remember – out of sight, out of mind!) and spend more time focusing on the project, rather than rooting through various filing cabinets for the papers you need.

The Home Office

Invest in adequate furniture. Make sure you have enough room for you to conduct your business tasks. That means having a space for computer hardware (if used), a spot for reference materials, file storage, and a location for supplies (pens, paper, etc.). Laundry, children's toys, and other non-work items should not be stored in your office if possible. **Tip:** Are your kids invading your home office? Establish a regular work schedule and reinforce to your kids the difference between "work time" and "play time." If you have an infant or a toddler, you'll have to schedule your work around nap time. But older children and teens should be able to understand and respect your duties and schedule.

The Wish-I-Had-One Office

Just because you don't have an office doesn't mean you can't be organized. Keep bills and important papers in file folders with clear labels. If you have a lot of these folders, you can purchase an inexpensive filing cabinet that can be tucked in a closet, or invest in a small plastic container or pocket divider to put them in. **Tip:** Get a set of 12 folders or a pocket divider with 12 tabs and label each one with the months of the year. Put each month's bills and receipts in the corresponding folder or pocket. This will make it easier to pay bills each month, review expenses for creating a monthly household budget, or file your taxes at the end of the year.

... Carpet Talk... Prevent Color Loss

Just like any colored fabric, carpet can fade and lose its color if not properly cared for. Here are a few things you can do to prevent color loss in your carpet.

Keep Out the Sun! We all love bright, sunny rooms, but too much direct sunlight will fade your carpeting. So when you're not in a room, pull the shades closed.

Keep Hands and Feet Clean! You may not realize it, but the chemicals and products you handle regularly can inadvertently stain your carpet. Bleach, acne medications, even athlete's foot medication can remove the color from your carpet. So make sure you and the other people in your household wash their hands and keep socks on their feet.

Treat Pet Stains Immediately! If Fluffy or Fido has an accident on the carpet, clean it up as quickly as possible. Pet urine that is left on carpeting can cause permanent color loss.

Call the Professionals! Many stains on carpet become color loss situations when consumer products are used incorrectly. These products can chemically "burn" or destroy carpet fibers in the process. More importantly, certain stains require very specific treatments to properly remove the stain. Using the wrong type of chemical can permanently "set" the stain or destroy the fibers, as stated above.

So when faced with tricky spots and stains, call Guarantee System at 616-451-0787. They have the right tools and products to save your carpet, and its color!



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This issue of Neighborhood News brought to you by:



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