



# Leaf



# Notes



The Newsletter of Lee County Master Gardeners

## Presidents Message

Dear Gardening Friends,

I hope this newsletter finds you and yours happy and healthy as we head into the Holidays.

As I sit in my home enjoying the Christmas decorations, holiday music, and from my window see camellias blooming and the beautiful color of the leaves it occurs to me that we have a great deal for which to be thankful. With the year-end approaching I want us to step back and remember all Master Gardeners have accomplished this year. We continue to serve our community in so many ways and I am proud to say, "I am part of the Lee County Master Gardener".

As we look forward to celebrating the holidays with our families, we also look toward a great beginning of 2018. Our MG Cover Dish Dinner and fellowship is January 16 at 6 o'clock at the church. Pat has fabulous programs set up for the new year, our demonstration gardens teams have plans for the springs, our native azalea plant sales and our mulch sales are being planned. This is the year for our big Garden Tour, Shelia, Rhonda, and their team of garden coordinators, sponsor committee, and ticket committees are busy, busy, busy planning, coordinating and checking every detail as they get ready for May 19-20 MG Garden tour.

Another big event for 2018 is our new Master Gardener Class starting February 12. If you are now a friend and would like to join the class or know of someone who wants to learn more about gardening, please consider joining the class. Twelve weeks of learning and fellowship.

A special wish to each of you and your family to have a great holiday season and happy New Year.

Sincerely,

Nancy

Nancy Golson

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## Quarterly Quote

**"You can observe a lot; by watching"**

~ Yogi Berra

## Editors Note

In this issue is an article from "The Atlantic" titled "Insects are in Serious Trouble".

I forwarded the article to my college roommate (Dr. Tim Cashatt—an entomologist in IL) who stated the following::

"Insect populations seem to be down in general to me also. Most populations cycle similar to bell curves under normal conditions, but I think other factors are at play also. The general broadcast spraying of the neonicotinoids I think is a major problem in this country. Agricultural crops are being over-sprayed into road rights-of-way and along the ditches where native species have been forced to retreat. In Illinois this is a serious problem. These chemicals have been banned in most of Europe and maybe Canada (?). Big producers of these chemicals have lobbied to keep them on the market in the USA."



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The Master Gardeners Program educates volunteers in science-based gardening and landscape practices and helps them effectively extend research-based information to the public as Master Gardeners. The Master Gardener's role is primarily that of "educator."

There are many different ways our volunteers in Lee County help the Alabama Extension System (ACES) expand outreach to the community. We construct and maintain community demonstration gardens and help implement community projects. A variety of garden-related programs and workshops are offered to the public.

**Upcoming Meetings and Events**

Future programs and events:

January 16 - Covered dish dinner

2018 Master garden Tour: May 19—20

A new Master Gardener Class is coming!

The class begins Monday February 12 and continues each Monday, concluding Monday April 30. The cost is \$150 and includes the textbook.

Please encourage your gardening friends and others who may be interested to sign up for the class. As always we could use more participants!

**Quarterly Quiz**

Do you know this leaf ?





### Caroline Dean Wildflower Trail

On Saturday November 4, a group of Master Gardeners and friends, planted perennials and hydrangeas in honor of Kelly Haynes.



Photos by Susan Peterson

### LCMG Meeting, November

#### Presentations



Lela Lofton and Susan Price present to Rosanna McGinnis a check for the first book donation for the Opelika Public Library. LCMG will present a book to the library in memory of each monthly program speaker



Susan Price and Gene Galloway present to Kerry Smith (Lee County Extension Service) a LCMG grant of \$1,000 for Harvest for Health.



## **This Winter's Hot Fashion: Parkas Stuffed With Vermont Weeds**

*New England farmers despise milkweed—but as its fibers become a ‘plant-based’ alternative used in winter clothing, they’re trying to warm up to it*

By Jennifer Levitz The Wall Street Journal

Each fall, as foliage turns and Vermont teems with tourists, the state’s farmers take pride in showing off their fetching fields of hay and corn. In the slanting sun, the crops call to mind the heyday of impressionist painters.

Take a closer look, and you may see something they’re a little less proud off—fields of milkweed, sometimes strategically tucked out of view.

Thanks to Canadian clothing companies, some farmers in this bucolic state are setting aside acreage—and their aesthetic biases—to cultivate a homely weed they have long considered a menace to kill at all cost.

With its warts, a messy sap that can sicken livestock and a tendency to grow in tall, mangy clumps that crowd out other plants, milkweed doesn’t enjoy a history of immortalization in oil paint.

Milkweed does eventually sprout fragrant flowers. But by season’s end, notes one gardening website, it looks like it got “hit with the ugly stick.”

Let the plant grow on purpose, Vermont farmer Andre Quintin says, and “it looks like you don’t know what the hell you’re doing.”

That is, until harvest rolls around these days.



Milkweed pod. Photo: Getty Images/iStock photo

Some makers of winter clothing are touting the white wispy floss in milkweed pods as a plant-based insulating material. Some forecasters say milkweed could yield \$800 an acre this year, which Vermont farmers say is better than they get for most commodities.

Heather Darby, a University of Vermont agronomist who is pushing farmers to plant milkweed as protection against volatile milk and grain prices, gives a presentation to prospective growers on “the five stages of dealing with milkweed.”

Her approach is modeled on a well-known psychological program for dealing with grief. “The biggest barrier the farmers have is trying to overcome how they feel about the plant itself,” she says. As a crop, “it looks like hell.”

Growers who let milkweed run rampant have long been considered poor farmers. Fretting about what passersby will think, Mr. Quintin, 46, tucks his milkweed crop on his “back 40,” he says, “so no one can see it from the road.”

Mr. Rainville and University of Vermont agronomist Heather Darby inspect milkweed pods. Photo: Thomas Jansen-Lonnquist

Among milkweed skeptics is Ken Van Hazinga, 65, who grows grain and hay in Shoreham, Vt., and says he couldn’t warm to farming it himself. He is trying not to judge peers who do. “There is no accounting for taste,” he says. “Some people might like this plant.”



## **This Winter's Hot Fashion: Parkas Stuffed With Vermont Weeds**

—Continued

Common milkweed, concentrated east of the Rockies and in southern Canada, has a burgeoning market thanks to a handful of Canadian companies and a farmers' co-op that have seized on the idea of stuffing jackets, mittens and other products with its fibers.

A new limited-edition milkweed-packed parka from Quartz Co., based near Montreal, did well enough last winter that the company will roll it out to 10 retailers this year, says its president, Jean-Philippe Robert.

Jaunty enough for the city and practical enough for the weekend cabin, he says, the "refined Canadian parka" sells for \$850, the same as Quartz's duck-down jacket. He says down is still popular but milkweed attracts customers intrigued by a "plant-based" insulator. "We were shocked by the interest we got."

Another company has crafted a milkweed snow suit. The Canadian Coast Guard says it recently tested milkweed-insulated parkas, gloves, mittens and coveralls but hasn't yet disclosed its findings.

It's rare for farmers to intentionally grow what are otherwise considered weeds for commercial uses, says Lee Van Wychen, science policy director for the Weed Science Society of America.

Perhaps the "weed" in milkweed is no longer deserved, says John Hayden, a 60-year-old Jeffersonville, Vt., fruit farmer who is growing milkweed and says the plant needs an image makeover. After all, a weed is essentially a wild plant growing where it's not wanted. He isn't sure his willfully grown milkweed qualifies. "We should change the name to 'milkflower.'"

Milkweed's sartorial use harks at least to World War II, when overseas supplies of kapok, an insulating fiber, were cut off. As a wartime substitute, the U.S. rallied civilians to pick milkweed pods for life jackets, says Gerald Wykes, a historian at the Monroe County Museum in Michigan.

After the war, for the most part milkweed went "back to its roots" as a humble weed, he says, because the ornery plant proved challenging to tame as a crop that could be grown in rows and harvested mechanically. The handpicking that went on in the war "wasn't terribly efficient," he says, and the rising use of synthetics lessened interest in all natural fibers.

Recently, says Ms. Darby, farmers have improved machinery that is designed to gently pick off milkweed pods without damaging the whole plant.

And milkweed has recently sprouted back into favor in some quarters because of its role not just as a green stuffing option but also as the key source of food for caterpillars of the embattled monarch butterfly.

There are now more than 2,000 acres of milkweed planted in Vermont and Quebec, although in Vermont, where efforts are newer, "most of the fields are kind of hidden right now," Ms. Darby says.

"To be planting your biggest enemy," she says, "you don't really want people to know you're doing that."

Bob Buermann, 60, a sheep farmer in South Hero, Vt., says his milkweed is along a well-traveled road, and he isn't getting rave reviews. "It looks really grungy."

A milkweed nightmare jolted Vermont farmer Roger Rainville, 63, from sleep one night. Mr. Rainville, who has 60 acres of milkweed, raises cattle and grows hay along the Canadian border, dreamed he had devalued his land by blanketing it with weeds and that he had ventured outside into air filled with milkweed fluff.

In real life, after his dream, he broke down and mowed one of his milkweed plantings that was near the road. He couldn't stand the way it looked.

"If you drive by a farmer and see they've got milkweed growing everywhere, you think he's lost it," Mr. Rainville says. "My father is rolling over in his grave, I swear to God."



## 2017 Grant Recipients and a Special Presentation

Colin Adcock speaking on how our Opelika High School grant was being used. Grant was used to buy equipment to use on their projects



Sean Forbes discussed how our grant is being used by Opelika Grows. Our grant has allowed them to grow and become a real source of community outreach.



### Special Presentation

4H History Seekers discussing what 4H is all about, and their use of the Chuck Browne Award.



Bill Shell receiving a plaque representing his participation in "Wondering Through Wonderful Gardens" in 2016



## **Insects Are In Serious Trouble**

ED YONG, *THE ATLANTIC*, OCT 19, 2017

In western Germany, populations of flying insects have fallen by around 80 percent in the last three decades.

The bottles were getting emptier: That was the first sign that something awful was happening. Since 1989, scientists from the Entomological Society Krefeld had been collecting insects in the nature reserves and protected areas of western Germany. They set up malaise traps—large tents that funnel any incoming insect upward through a cone of fabric and into a bottle of alcohol. These traps are used by entomologists to collect specimens of local insects, for research or education. “But over the years, [the Krefeld team] realized that the bottles were getting emptier and emptier,” says Caspar Hallmann, from Radboud University.

By analyzing the Krefeld data—1,503 traps, and 27 years of work—Hallmann and his colleagues have shown that most of the flying insects in this part of Germany are flying no more. Between 1989 and 2016, the average weight of insects that were caught between May and October fell by an astonishing 77 percent. Over the same period, the weight of insects caught in the height of summer, when these creatures should be at their buzziest, fell by 82 percent.

“We were expecting declines, but the extent of them was tremendous,” says Hans de Kroon, who was involved in analyzing the Krefeld data. “If this was in agricultural settings, we wouldn’t be quite so surprised. But it’s especially alarming that it happened in nature reserves.”

There have long been signs of such a decline. Studies have also shown that populations of European butterflies have halved since 1990, honeybee colonies have fallen by 59 percent in North America since World War II, and populations of British moths have dropped by 30 percent per decade. But most of these surveys focused on particular groups, whereas Hallmann’s group looked at the entire spectrum of flying insects. “It confirms the widespread, windscreen phenomenon,” he says. “Any truck driver in the developed world will tell you that they used to squash a lot of insects on the windscreen. Now the windscreens stay clean.”

“The study makes visible what otherwise has been an invisible decline in insect abundance,” says Michelle Trautwein, from the California Academy of Sciences. “Our mistreatment of the planet has been recognizably bad for elephants and coral reefs, but it seems likely that it has also been just as bad for flies, moths, beetles.”

This is, to put it mildly, a huge problem.

Insects are the lynchpins of many ecosystems. Around 60 percent of birds rely on them for food. Around 80 percent of wild plants depend on them for pollination. If they disappear, ecosystems everywhere will collapse. But also, insects are the most diverse and numerous group of animals on the planet. If they’re in trouble, we’re *all* in trouble.

There’s a debate about whether the Earth is in the middle of a sixth extinction—an exceptionally severe period of biological annihilation of the kind that has only happened five times before. One of the talking points in this debate is that, as Peter Brannen recently wrote, “when mass extinctions hit, they don’t just take out big charismatic megafauna, like elephants ... They take out hardy and ubiquitous organisms as well—things like clams and plants and insects.”

And. Insects.

“We can’t wait till we know exactly what’s leading to these losses. We have to act.”



## **Insects Are In Serious Trouble**

CONTINUED

But remember that the German study only looked at one particular region. And it raises a question: If insects have disappeared by such a large degree, wouldn't other species that depend on them be in much worse shape? Wouldn't Germany's flowers, birds, spiders, and reptiles also be plummeting? "We see great declines of insectivorous species—but not to this extent in most cases," de Kroon acknowledges. "Some species could switch food sources, but we don't really know what's going on. We do know that we see declines in even common species, like blackbirds, starlings, and sparrows."

Another unanswered question: Are all groups declining equally? "It would be interesting to see the list of species they collected, as Malaise traps are very good at collecting certain species and poor at collecting others, like dragonflies," says Jessica Ware, from Rutgers University. "If insect [groups] vary in their response to climate change, temperature, habitat change, or other factors," that could change the implications of the study's stark percentages. (Hallmann notes that identifying the thousands of individuals in a single trap, let alone all 1,503, would mean months of work for a team of specialists. That's why they focused on total weight.)

Also, what's behind the insect downfall? Pollutants and pesticides are likely to be a problem. Neonicotinoids—the world's most popular insecticides—can mess with bees in myriad ways, impairing their memory, befuddling their spatial skills, and preventing them from finding food.

More surprisingly, the German team couldn't find any evidence that the two usual suspects—habitat loss and climate change—were important culprits. The declines were similar in every kind of habitat, whether healthy grasslands or nutrient-poor wastelands. And although weather patterns in the region could explain the numbers of insects across a season, they couldn't account for the year-on-year decline.

But neither line of evidence is clear-cut. The team didn't look at larger-scale climate events, like prolonged droughts, and they couldn't measure the effect of habitat fragmentation—cutting up the land available to insects rather than merely reducing it. Indeed, the nature reserves in the German study are small, too distant from each other for insects to travel between, and locked in by agricultural land. Those are "hostile environments" for insects, de Kroon says, so species that thrive in the reserves could drain into the surrounding no-man's-land—and be lost.

Ware wonders if some of the vanished insects are simply migrating into other areas. "We know that certain dragonflies, for example, are changing their ranges in response to climate change," she says. "So are neighboring countries experiencing a similar loss, or are specific species moving northward?"

That's why researchers need to do similar surveys in other countries, says Crystal Maier, from Chicago's Field Museum. "We could actually do that. We have similar samples here at the museum, for similar ranges and time periods. You could spend a lot of time identifying species but they just weighed the samples. That's something we don't usually do but it's so simple, and it would be interesting."

In the meantime, "we should use anything we have to enhance insect populations, like adding flower-rich areas around the margins [of agricultural land]," says Hallmann.

"We don't want people to get depressed," says de Kroon. "Ecosystems are very resilient. They're still functioning quite well despite this loss. Let's make use of that resilience. We can't wait till we know exactly what's leading to these losses. We have to act."



## Potpourri

By Charlot Ritenbaugh

Thoughts of gardening turn indoors for a few weeks as we decorate to spend time inside while it is colder and wetter. In addition to forcing paperwhites there are amaryllis and hyacinth bulbs to try. I read recently that snowflakes, *Leucojum* spp. are great for forcing. I have a few planted, waiting in my garden work room now.

It's never too late to also add a few bulbs to your garden beds. Some great inexpensive ones can be found lingering on the shelves in stores. If you like to order on line you might try "species" tulips. These are those tiny tulips that will multiply and return year after year in our climate because they originated in Turkey, long before their showier descendants were developed in Holland. You may call the red and white species, lady or candy tulip. Scott Ogden recommends adding jonquils, 'Trevithian', and summer snowflakes, *L. aestivum*, to your bed of lady tulips, *Tulipa clusiana*.

Composting is good. Egg shells have wonderful minerals to improve the soil. I read recently that you can save up your shells to brew a tea for your plants. Pour boiling water over the shells and allow them to steep overnight. The resulting "eggshell-infused" water is rich in calcium and potassium, as well as very small amounts of phosphorus, magnesium and sodium. Sounds like a great liquid fertilizer!

<http://homeguides.sfgate.com/homemade-eggshell-plant-fertilizer-42947.html>

This time of year also offers time to plan for next year's gardening. We have had fun using two "passed over old-time" perennials in the garden beds at Kiesel Park. Sea Holly, *Eryngium* spp., flowers resemble thistles, but have a blue tint that stands out in the early summer garden. The bees love it and it dries well for arrangements. Another pretty perennial that attracts pollinators and the human eye is Verbascum, an ornamental mullein. It is a short-lived perennial but will reseed in your garden from its long blooming abundant spikes of pastel colored blooms.

For the LCMGA entry in the Lee County Fair in 2016, I attempted to cover an old bowling ball in pennies to create a piece of garden "artistry." Ha! Those dang pennies would not stick to the ball! Late this summer I found my efforts were not in vain. This fella was enjoying his view of the garden from my crumbling handiwork! May your days be filled with JOY!





## Dealing with ticks in Alabama: 3 Myths

Bill Finch for AL.com; edited by David Peterson

### Myth No 1

#### Tick diseases are a summertime problem.

Wrong. In the Southeast, The period from February through May may be the most likely time for tick borne infections. Warnings about tick exposure should come as early in the tick season as possible. The first half of the tick season is arguably the worst of the year, because it is dominated by young, tiny ticks that are hard to see, and are thus responsible for most disease transmission. Masses of young ticks start emerging and dispersing on the Gulf Coast in February, during the first warm days of our spring. In Huntsville, it may be a month or so later.

### Myth No 2

#### Lyme disease is the tick disease you need to worry about.

Wrong. Rocky Mountain spotted tick fever, for example, has a much higher incidence of death than Lyme disease. In addition there's a slew of dangerous diseases in the Southeast that you've never heard of, and that get precious little attention from scientists, doctors, or media – probably because they are most common in the South. Southerners should dread Ehrlichiosis, Rickettsia, Bourbon virus and Babesiosis at least as much as they do Lyme disease. The Alpha-GAL meat allergy imparted by ticks – which has made an increasing number of people dangerously allergic to beef and pork – seems to be primarily a Southern phenomenon.

And scientists are still trying to unravel the mystery of the Southern Tick-Associated Rash Illness – STARI for short. There's new evidence that this complex of tick related illnesses could be far more common than anybody recognized, and that it might be as serious a problem down here as Lyme disease is in the north. .

The latest research indicates that it could in fact be related to the bacterium that causes Lyme disease, but is so genetically distinct and variable that it doesn't show up in conventional tests for Lyme.

### Myth No 3

#### If we can figure out how to control tick diseases in the Northeast US, then we can do the same in Alabama.

Wrong. The woods and wildlife of Alabama are very different from the woods and wildlife of New England and the upper East Coast. We have tick species never encountered in New England And the simple wildlife structure that is integral to building the reservoirs of tick disease in New England – transmission from ticks to white footed mice to deer and back again – doesn't exist in the Southeast.

In the Southeast, for example, we should have three big advantages when it comes to limiting the development of tick diseases: a healthy population of reptiles relative to mammals like mice, an abundance of opossums, and (in many rural areas) a high frequency of prescribed fire.

Yes, I know you have a superstitious aversion to snakes, but you only do the devil a favor when you kill one. Researchers have discovered that reptiles appear to be exceptionally good at blocking the transmission of tick –borne diseases. And in areas where the population of snakes and lizards is high relative to the mammal population (as it still is in some parts of Alabama) the incidence of some tick diseases seems to decline significantly.

The possum may play a similar role. You may not have much respect for possum hygiene, but possums are almost obsessive about keeping a clean coat. And these marsupials are much better than most mammals at grooming away ticks before they can transmit disease.



## **Dealing with ticks in Alabama: 3 Myths**

Continued

And finally, fire (which was once as natural in Southern woods as rain) can play a big role in dramatically reducing tick populations and diseases, particularly if the fires are managed to mimic the frequent, low intensity fires that once dominated our landscape.

These are all advantages that may have helped to minimize tick diseases in the Southeast for many decades. Unfortunately many of these advantages are now being lost, and perhaps it's no surprise that tick diseases are rising dramatically here.

So for us Southerners, the intense research going into the link between mice, deer and tick diseases in New England is not helpful. We'll never get a handle on our own tick problems until we understand the uniqueness of the Southern environment, the Southern climate, and Southern ticks.

*Article submitted by Tomie Dugas*

## **Answer to Quiz on Page 2**



**Katydid**, common name of certain large, singing, winged insects belonging to the long-horned grasshopper family (Tettigoniidae) in the order Orthoptera. Katydid's are green or, occasionally, pink and range in size from 1 1/4 to 5 in. (3–12.5 cm) long. Katydid's are nocturnal and arboreal; they sing in the evening.

## **Beautiful Insect**

An interesting, beautiful insect, photographed by Kitty Greene, on a coneflower in her yard after Irma hit us.



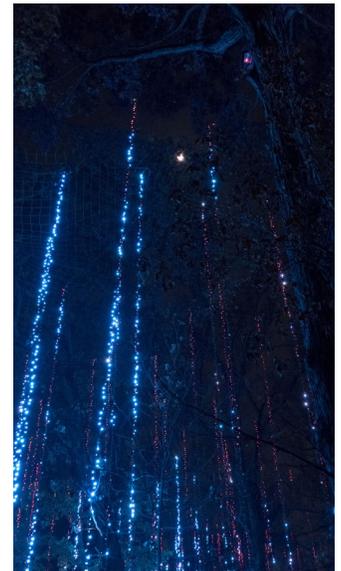
***Atteva aurea***, otherwise known as the Ailanthus Webworm Moth. The larva feeds on Ailanthus and Paradise Tree and lives in a communal web.



## **Garden Lights**

On Wednesday November 29, several LCMG members visited the Atlanta, Ga Botanical Gardens for their annual Garden Lights exhibition. This is a walking tour, and with perfect weather the display was spectacular.

Below are several pictures taken at the event by David Peterson.

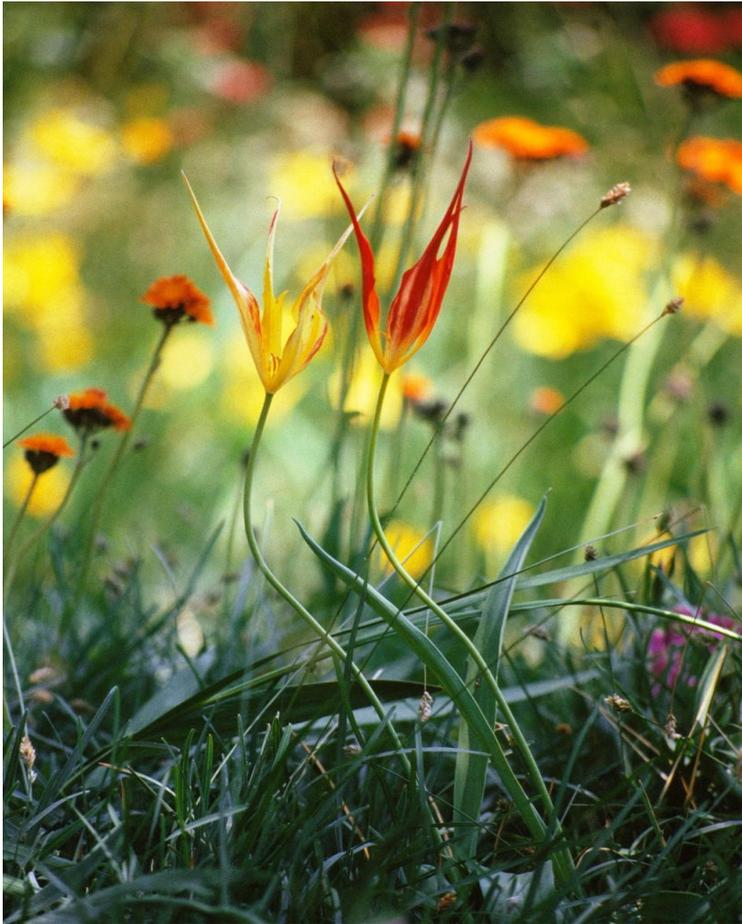




## **Wild Tulips: Get In On This Gardening Trend Now**

By Cynthia Kling  
WSJ Oct 12, 2017

Forget predictable Dutch hybrids. These smaller, cooler tulips originally from Turkey are gaining popularity stateside fast.



### **SPIKED PUNCH:**

Pointy petals and vibrant hues distinguish the rare *T. acuminata*. PHOTO: GETTY IMAGES

**Mention tulips**, and few of us think of scimitars and Suleiman the Magnificent. But before the Dutch began breeding the flower as the zaftig blossoms we know today, the tulip was a tiny gemlike bloom that filled gardens of the Ottoman empire, its likeness woven into rugs and fired into ceramics. Travelers to Turkey still find mosques graced with their effigy, and flower beds along the Bosphorus are full of them.

**American gardeners** are increasingly succumbing to the charm of these demure flowers, variously referred to as species, wild or botanical tulips. “People want a naturalistic look now, not the formality of 5,000 stiff tulips lined up like little soldiers,” said Tim Schipper, owner of Colorblends, a bulb purveyor in Bridgeport, Conn. He has seen his wild-tulip orders grow by nearly 50% over the last 10 years.

Small and delicate-looking, species tulips appeal to gardeners not only because they’re more subtle than their boisterous Dutch cousins but because they boast practical advantages. White Flower Farms, in Morris, Conn., has been adding them to display gardens and their catalog because they appreciate the way the bulbs perennialize and multiply. And because these tulips originated in arid regions of Central Asia and the Middle East, head gardener Cheryl Whalen places them in spots that dry out in summer—in meadows and other areas that don’t get hit by the sprinkler.



## **Wild Tulips: Get In On This Gardening Trend Now**

-Continued

Ms. Whalen also matches them to foliage that's emerging in spring, when these tulips come up, planting deep-coppery orange *T. whittallii* under purple-leaved peonies or pairing others with ferns that politely wait to grow so as not to upstage the dainty tulips.

"They're tough, tiny and elegant," said Lisa Roper, horticulturist in charge of the Gravel Garden at Chanticleer Garden in Wayne, Penn., And they're neat. After a tulip spends its bloom, leaves should be left for weeks to nourish next year's bulbs, and wide-leaved Dutch varieties produce a lot of ugly dieback. Ms. Roper noted that the slender foliage of Turkish tulips "doesn't look messy later." She pairs *T. praetins* 'Shogun,' which sports Creamsicle-orange petals and a deep-orange interior, with blue Muscari (grape hyacinths) or elfin, yellow 'Hawera' daffodils.

Species tulips carry the characteristics of their ancestors: single layers of pointy petals, unusual colorations, interesting habits. Mr. Schipper is partial to *T. linifolia*, whose brilliant carmine face opens so wide in the sun the petals bend back toward the stem, revealing gray-purple anthers (the little weiner-shaped parts of the stamen that hold pollen).

Gardeners prize the historic resonance of the tulips. During the reign of Suleiman the Magnificent (1520-1566), the sultan's court painter stylized the tulip in an elongated form with scimitar-like petals. According to Walter Denny, a professor at the University of Massachusetts and senior consultant in the Metropolitan Museum of Art's department of Islamic art, the sultan's son-in-law seized upon the design to create "an Ottoman brand"; he was unhappy with the Turkish elite's penchant for Italian silks. The shy tulip soon decorated everything from robes to buildings.

The Austrian Ambassador to the empire received a gift of bulbs at that time, which may be how the tulip arrived in Europe, said Mr. Denny. Some 400 years later, Vita Sackville-West, the author, poet and garden designer, clip-clopped through a Near East desert on a camel to source wild tulips for her English garden at Sissinghurst.

As cut flowers, Dutch tulips work well because their lollipop blooms catch the eye from across a room. Wild tulips require more intimacy. Try a few *T. humilis* 'Persian Pearl' (magenta with a touch of silver-gray) in a mercury goblet on a counter, or *T. sylvestris* (buttercup-yellow and green-striped) in a powder room, so you can appreciate both their color and sweet scent.

Ms. Roper sows 200 bulbs in a few square feet to get big drifts of flowers. (You have until before the ground freezes to bury bulbs.) They bloom and naturalize for years if planted well: Thomas Jefferson's *T. sylvestris* still spread throughout his Monticello meadows today.



## **Wild Tulips: Get In On This Gardening Trend Now**

Four favorite wild bulbs

from WSJ



**GRAND CENTER** Prized for its colors, the pricey crocus-like bloom of *T. humilis* 'Alba Coerulea Oculata' shows a steel-blue center under strong sun. PHOTO: WHITE FLOWER FARM



**PAINTED LADY** The dark-pink exterior petals of *T. clusiana* 'Lady Jane' open into wide white stars. It also reseeds at varying heights for a different show every year. \$17 for 50, [vanengelen.com](http://vanengelen.com) PHOTO: VAN ENGELEN FLOWER BULBS



**FLAME THROWER** Happiest during dry summers in well-drained soil, the blood-orange *T. whittallii* looks like it's on fire when hit by sun. Perfect for a rock garden. PHOTO: WHITE FLOWER FARM



**HOLD THE MELLOW** Often found in woodlands, this sweet-smelling charmer is a tiny thug to some, as it multiplies madly in the right locations—like Jefferson's Monticello. *T. Sylvestris*