

Let's Get Growing

Tips provided for wise planting of tulip bulbs

By MARJORIE MASON HOGUE
Correspondent

The bright colors of the spring bulb displays in retail outlets are very tempting. How easy it is to select bulbs by simply choosing your favorite colors. Here are some tips for wise bulb buying.

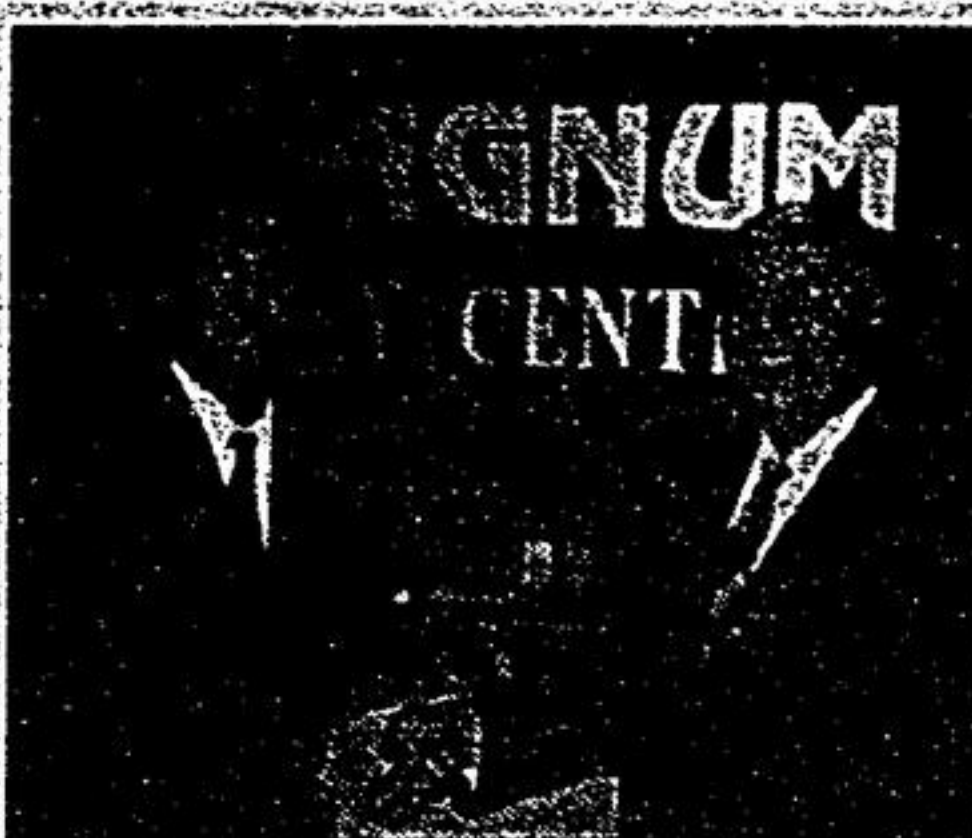
Look for the necessary information on the package or box if you are choosing from a bulk bin. For correct garden placement, you must know the height to which the plant will grow. Take care this may be listed in cm or inches. Another important factor is the bloom time and unfortunately the information provided is not very specific. The terms - very early, early, mid-season and late, will only allow you to plan a succession of bloom. The actual blooming date depends on many factors - air temperature, soil type (sand warms more quickly than clay), nearness to warmth of house foundation, placement of garden (bulbs on a sunny slope will bloom before those in a shady corner). But, generally, these non-specific terms mean: very early - late March to April; early - mid-April to early May; mid-season - first half of May; late season - latter half of May and early June.

Some gardeners choose only early blooming bulbs so that the bulb foliage has ripened and may be removed when it's time to plant annuals. Others have mastered the art of combining later bloomers in the perennial border to provide early color and then their maturing foliage will be camouflaged by tall perennials. Bulbs can vary greatly in price. New varieties or unusual bulbs are more expensive. Size is another factor. Topsize tulips are referred to as 12+. These are usually sold in bulk.

The smaller 11/12s are generally packaged and offered at a lesser price. Narcissus are sold as DN-3 or single nose bulbs. DN-2 has two bulbs joined at the base (the smaller of the two is called the daughter bulb and may only produce leaves in its first year). DN-1 bulbs have three or more noses and produce at least two, maybe three blooms. With bulbs, bigger is better! The best bulbs are

those that feel firm and heavy in comparison to their size. Don't be concerned about slight nicks or imperfections in the outer skin. Groupings of the same variety are generally more effective than mixes. Larger gardens require bigger groups, e.g. five tulips may be suitable in a small garden but a clump of 15 might be needed for effect in a bigger space. You could be the winner of a box of 100 bulbs

donated by the Netherlands Flowerbulb Information Centre. Send a letter or postcard with name, address and phone number to Let's Get Growing, c/o The Tribune, 88 Brock St. W., Uxbridge, ON L9P 1R4. Attn: Marjorie Mason Hogue. You may include a garden question or suggest a topic you would like to see discussed in this column. The draw will be made at the beginning of October.



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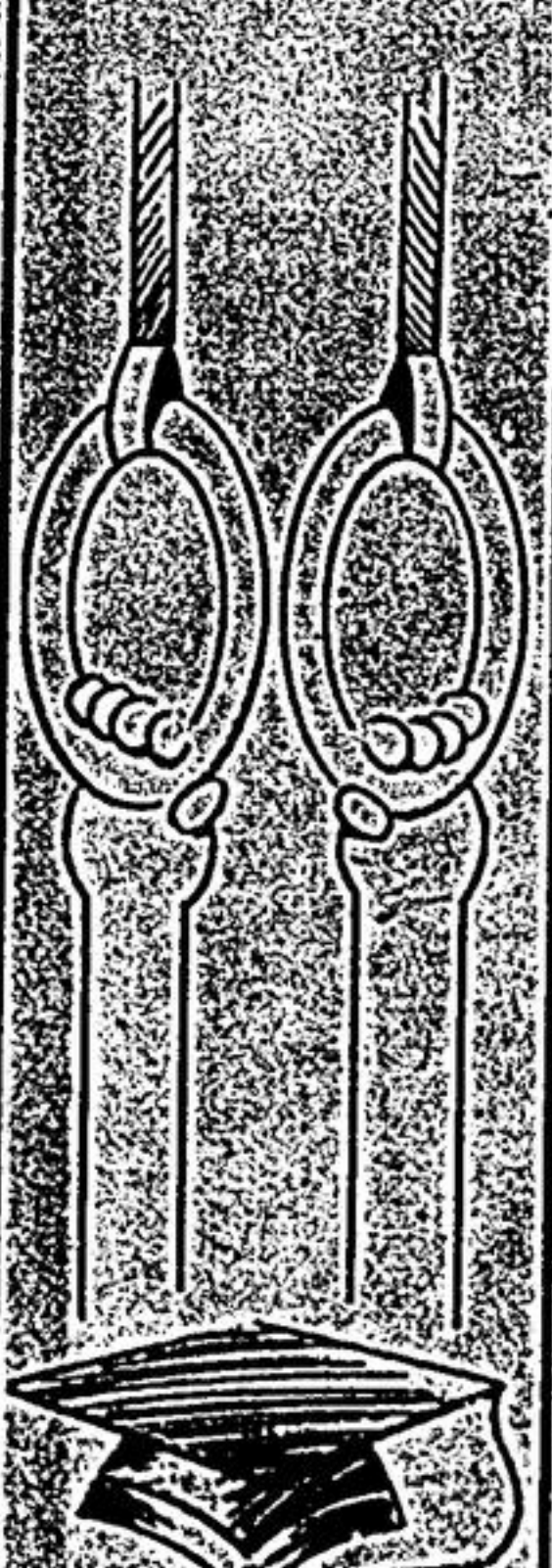
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