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Don't rely on photographs for picture-perfect tulips

Many people choose tulip bulbs simply by looking at the pretty pictures. Often, the results may be rather haphazard. Look carefully at the display box or package for the type of tulip, its bloomtime and height. The height may range from four to 24 inches and according to variety, bloom may be from April to early June.

Early tulips usually bloom in late April. Several factors



**Let's
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*Marjorie
Mason Hogue*

can cause variations in bloomtime.

- location (foundation plantings flower earlier),
- soil type (sandy soil warms faster),
- amount of sunlight and temperature.

There are several classifications of tulips which are early bloomers. The Kaufmaniana are short, stocky plants well suited to the rock garden or to edging walkways. The Fosteriana group are slightly taller (10 to 14 inches) with large flowers - the Emperor series are part of this group.

In the same height range are groups of tulips known simply as "single early" or "double early." Some of the species (original, wild) tulips are also in this category - best known is tulipa pulchella violacea with small violet pink flowers.

Tulips that flower in early May are referred to as "mid-season." The Greigii type are short (six to 10 inches) and have purple striped or blotched foliage. They provide a succession of bloom in the rockery. The Triumph tulips range in height from 14 to 16 inches and are available in a wide range of colours. The Darwin Hybrids are taller - up to 22 inches - and have large flowers. These are the types which are usually planted in masses in parks. Most of the tiny species tulips also bloom in early May.

In the late season category (mid May to early June) are some of the most beautiful cultivars. The petals of the "fringed" types have frilly edges sometimes of a contrasting colour.

Most elegant are the lily-flowered varieties with their gracefully pointed reflexed petals. Most flamboyant are the parrot tulips - often simply described as gaudy! More simple are the viridiflora varieties. Sometimes called "green" tulips they feature stripes or blotches of green in the blooms.

Looking exactly like large peonies are the double late group. The bouquet tulips have been engineered by man to produce three to five flowers per stem in the first season after planting. The group known as single late are back of the border beauties best drifted through tall perennials. Some species are also late bloomers - t. acuminata is the most unusual with its narrow, flame-like red and yellow petals.

In each category, you will find varieties with variegated foliage - these are decorative even during the ripening period after blooming. In the species classification, there are varieties which are multi-flowering - producing several blooms per stem every year.

When selecting tulips choose those that are firm and feel "heavy" in comparison to their age. For best results plant them eight inches deep (six inches is adequate for the smaller species bulbs).

Send your questions or comments to:
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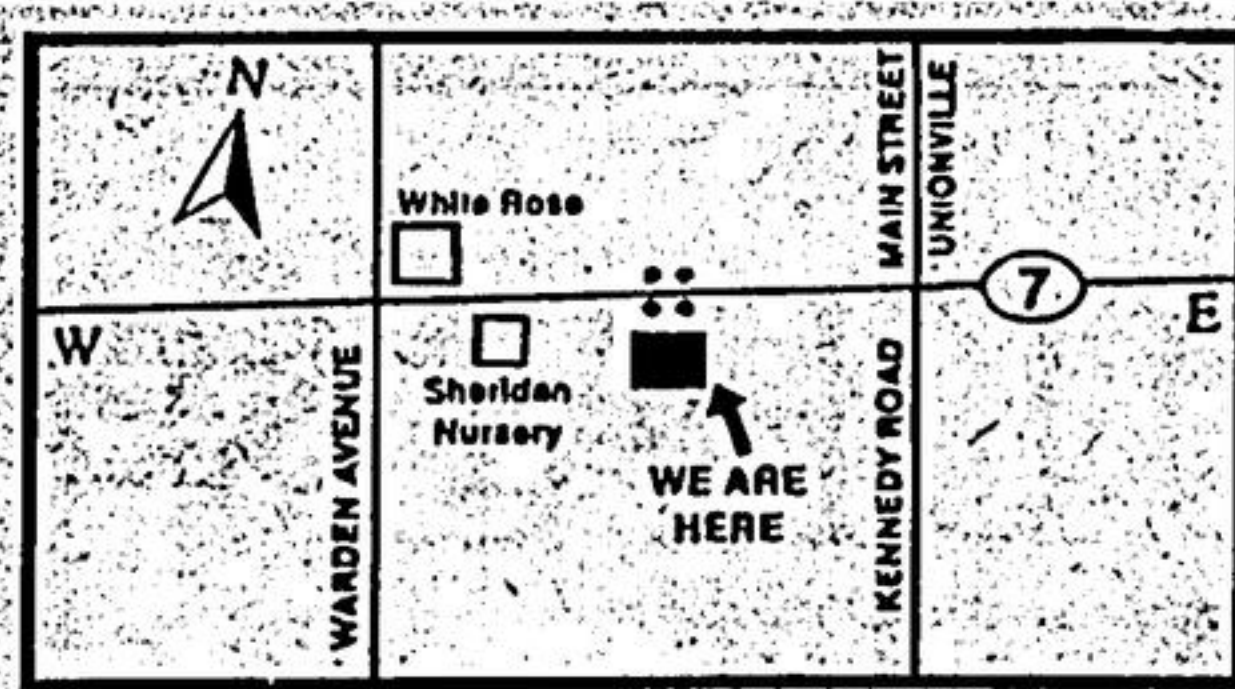
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