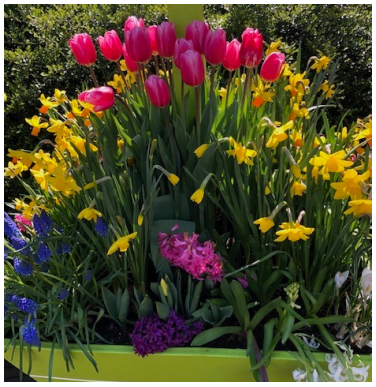
Texas Master Gardener
Texas A&M AgriLife Extension
Johnson County

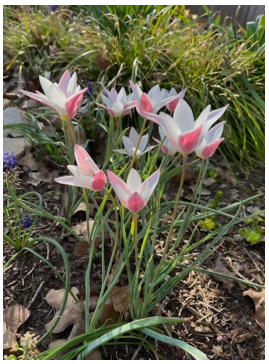
Johnson County Master Gardeners

NEWSLETTER

October 2026 | Volume 3







Photos: J. Petr, D. Petr

Tulips

Among the many spring flowering bulbs, tulips are some of the showiest. Tulips originated in the mountains of Turkey and first came to Holland in 1593. By the early 1600's, they were so prized that at one point an interest in 1 bulb was equal to the value of a home.

The original tulips from Turkey were small, low growing plants. Over time, horticulturists have created many colors and varieties of tulips. While the black tulip is a myth, several tulip varieties are such a deep purple as to appear black.

Tulips are not native to Texas, but Darwin hybrid and "species" tulips grow well in Johnson County's Zone 8. Most of the Darwin hybrid tulips should be considered annuals, however, the "species" tulips will return for several years and may naturalize in the garden.

The Darwin hybrid tulip bulbs must be chilled for 6 to 8 weeks at about 50 degrees in a dedicated section of the refrigerator away from fruit before planting. Tulips do best in sunny locations with well-draining, loose soil. A general rule is to plant bulbs between Thanksgiving and the New Year, when soil temperatures are around 55 degrees Fahrenheit and the ground is not frozen. When purchasing bulbs, pay attention to bloom time to assure a continuous display. Retailers that source their bulbs from the Netherlands have a wide variety of good quality bulbs.

There are several ways to plant tulips in a garden. Large groupings of 100 or more bulbs can be planted in a short time by clearing the top 3 to 4 inches of prepared soil and placing it on a tarp. Press the tulip bulbs into the bed following spacing guidelines on the package and cover again with the soil. Pansies or other shallow rooted annual winter flowers may be planted on top of the covered bulbs. For a more natural look, plant 5 to 10 tulip bulbs in groupings scattered throughout the garden. Tulips also do well in pots, but should be protected from freezing and after an initial watering, left alone until the green sprouts appear. Then water sparingly.

And while tulips may be some of the showiest bulbs, daffodils, crocus, snowflakes, hyacinth and other spring blooming bulbs also do well in Johnson County and continue the spring show in your garden.

The following tulip varieties have grown well for me in Johnson County:

Darwin hybrid tulips:
Menton – rich pink with orange highlights
Blushing Lady – pale yellow brushed with rose
Tulipa 'Van Eijk' - pink

Species tulips:
Tulipa clusiana 'Tinka' – soft yellow with red stripes
Tulipa clusiana 'Lady Jane' – white with rose stripes

--Jean Petr, Member

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Photo: D. Goulding

Planting Garlic

October is a good time to plant garlic in Johnson County and can be planted about 4-6 weeks before the first hard frost which is usually between November 21 and November 30.

There are two types of garlic: hardneck and softneck. Hardneck has a stiff central stalk (scape) and does better in northern climates. Softneck garlic has a softer top, does not form a central stalk (scape), and is better for warmer climates like Johnson County. It is also milder in taste and stores longer. You can order the bulbs from online seed catalogues, pick them up from feed stores, or use organic garlic from the grocery store as this is usually the softneck variety from California.

You will need to plant garlic bulbs in a location that gets 6 to 8 hours of sunlight, in loose soil with good drainage. Incorporate 2 to 4 inches of good compost before planting in raised beds or well-prepared soil. Separate garlic bulbs into individual cloves and plant with the pointed end up, 2 inches deep and about 6 inches apart. A suggested way to give garlic a head start is by soaking the cloves in 1 gallon of warm water with 1 tablespoon of fish fertilizer and 1 tablespoon of baking soda. The baking soda will help sanitize the bulbs and the fish fertilizer will give them a nutrient boost. After planting, add 1 to 2 inches of mulch over the bed to protect the bulbs from the winter cold and to deter weeds. Garlic doesn't want any competition growing in its bed.

In about 8 or 9 months, when the lower leaves turn yellow and dry out and the top is still green, the garlic will be ready to harvest. Stop watering for a few days as it is easier and cleaner to lift the garlic bulbs from drier soil. Leave the stalk on the garlic and lay them out to dry in the shade with spacing between for up to 2 weeks. Direct sun at this point can damage the garlic. Store the garlic in a cool, dry place. There are many YouTube videos on braiding garlic if you are interested in storing it in that manner.

Or you can cut off the dry tops and put the bulbs in your pantry. My garlic lasts about 5 months.

Garlic is something everyone can grow with very little effort. Try it this fall. You will amaze your friends and family with fresh garlic.

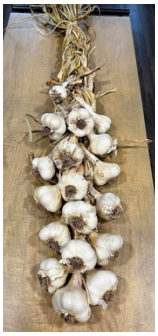

Photo: D. Goulding

--Debbie Goulding, President

Upcoming Events

Lunch and Learn
October 7 11:00 am - 1:00 pm Guinn Garden
Registration Required at Extension Office

JCMG Monthly Meeting
October 19 4:00 pm Extension Office

HEB Cleburne Store Native Plant Sale
October 17 11:00 am – 3:00 pm
October 18 12:00 noon – 4:00 pm
October 24 11:00 am – 3:00 pm
October 25 12:00 noon – 4:00 pm

Johnson County Extension Office

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Johnson County Master Gardener Association is under the direction of Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service to provide research based, non-biased horticulture information to the county. Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service is an equal opportunity employer and program provider.