

Lavant Horticultural Society

Notes from Tim Woodland's talk 'Container Planting for All the Year Round' 8th March 2017

Tim's bulb sales website: www.directbulbs.co.uk

(These notes cannot attempt to pass on everything from the talk, but may help as an aide memoire)

Feeding

On many occasions during his talk Tim emphasised the need to feed bulbs, with a potash and phosphate rich fertiliser, in order to develop the bulbs for a good display the following year. They should only be fed when they are in leaf – otherwise, they will not be able to use the feed and it will be wasted.

Crocus

The earliest flowering ones are the species crocus, such as *Crocus fuscotinctus*. The more common larger flowered (Dutch) crocus are better for naturalising – a wider range of colours is now available on the market.

Daffodils

The UK is the largest producer of daffodil bulbs, about 45,000 tonnes a year, of which 70-80% are grown in Cornwall. There are some 20,000 varieties. It takes about 25 years from breeding a new variety to bringing it on the market in large quantities.

The characteristics of new varieties being introduced are now driven by the demands of the cut flower market; this includes stronger stems, which make newer double varieties less likely to collapse under weight of rain than older double.

The largest single variety of daffodil bulbs sold is 'Tête-à-Tête'.

Tulips

Do not naturalise well as they do not come back well in following years. To ensure a good display, tulip bulbs should be replaced with new ones every year.

The exceptions to this are the species tulips; these are smaller and earlier and do come back year after year.

Varieties bred to catch the attention of buyers include those with variegated leaves that provide interest over a longer period, even when the tulip is not in flower.

Hyacinths

Indoors, specially prepared bulbs should be potted up in September and kept in the dark, before being brought out to bloom for Christmas.

For outdoors there is a wide range of colours. They have a wonderful fragrance, so plant in pots or borders close to the house and where people will walk past them..

Anemone blanda

Excellent for naturalising under trees, but also work well in containers.

Muscari

Now available in a wide range of shades. 'Snowtop' has a blue flower spike that is white at its very top.

Some newer varieties do not spread so prolifically as the traditional ones. However, putting them in a container avoids any such concerns.

Lilies

Flower from July into September. New lily varieties can be introduced relatively quickly, only 5-6 years from breeding a new cultivar to its appearance on the market.

There are now pollen-free varieties, including ones with cultivar names starting "Easy"

'Gold Band' - the white petals have a broad gold band running down the centre.

Oriempet cultivars (Oriental/trumpet crosses) can easily grow up to 6 feet.

On the other hand there are short varieties, such as 'Mona Lisa', which is pink and fragrant and grows to only 12-18 inches.

'Spring Pink' – strong grower that does well in containers & borders, reaching about 3 ft.

Lily beetle – best picked off by hand. Remove also any eggs on the underside of the leaves and the lumps of wet black excrement that hide the larvae.

Spraying with 'Provado' can be effective. A variant suggested from the floor is to spray the compost with 'Provado' after planting the lily bulbs.

Canna and begonias

Start off now, indoors at not less than 5°C. They perform better if they are started early

Begonias

Flower from July to first frosts, but need to be dead-headed and fed. When the frosts arrive, cut back the top growth right down to the corms.

Eucomis (pineapple lily): impressive thick flowering spike; easy to grow.

Dahlias

Need to be started off indoors and not put out until all risk of frosts is past.

Providing they are in well-drained soil, the tubers will survive in milder areas such as here, but they should be protected by a layer of mulch.

7 years from the breeding of a new variety to market.

Dwarf dahlias are available, particularly suitable for containers.

Dahlia imperialis – quite unlike the usual cultivated dahlias, with a panoply of nodding flowers on top of an extremely tall stem.

Gladioli: seem to have been out of fashion for some years.

Newer dwarf varieties, such as G. 'Clemence', good for containers, about 1½ ft.

Acidanthera (now re-categorised as *Gladiolus callianthus*)

Impressive white blooms with a purple centre. Good both in borders and in containers.

Sprekelia formosissima – lily like flowers but with long strappy petals

Scadoxus multiflorus – unusual, with a large stunningly bright red globe of flowers, reminiscent of alliums, on top of a thick single stem. Easy to grow, but needs to be started off indoors and can only be put out in the warm summer months. Alternatively, it can be grown as an indoor plant.

Zantedeschia (Calla): newer varieties available with longer thicker stems, again driven by the demands of the cut flower market.

Amarine (Amaryllis/Nerine cross) Hardy enough to grow outdoors in UK

Crinus – will bulk up over 2-3 years

Nerines

Available in white, red, pinks and mauves. They provide an unexpected splash of bright colour very late in the season.

Hippeastrum

There are now many shorter varieties available, doubles as well as singles.