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tulips of the troughs

Posted in [All posts](#), [Tulips](#) on 29th November 2015

I love old zinc dolly tubs and troughs. The finding and buying of old beautiful pots, dolly tubs and tin baths are, in terms of price, often a great indulgence, but without doubt they are a worthy investment. A cheap and nasty plastic pot looks like a bad tooth in a garden, regardless of what may be within it.



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This autumn, I've been gifted three old cattle troughs from my friend Julian's farm. He scratched his head at my request for them. For him, once they become rusted inside and begin leaking, their lives are at an end.

I began rubbing them down and swilling them out straight away. Once cleaned and dried out, I painted their insides jet black with a sticky, tar-like, rust-resistant paint. Then the bottom was lined with a good 15 inches of crocks, which are essential in any pot for good drainage.



Large containers seemingly eat up even the largest bags of multipurpose composts. The troughs, once more than half full, were planted with their first bulbs – tulips of course! I've planted Sarah's Favourite Tulip Collection in two of the troughs. This mix is made up of 'Jan Reus', 'Orange favourite' and the commanding, mahogany, double-chocolate-blooming 'Black Hero'.



In the remaining trough that sits under a window, I've mixed the single but sultry and reliable 'Ronaldo' with the cappuccino, double, very-much-in Vogue tulip 'La Belle Epoque'.

I've tried to grow ornamental cabbages this year. They are smaller than the ones you would normally buy and less dense in their hearts, but I quite like this. They are an incredibly vibrant highlighter-felt-tip pen purple. I'm grateful to the colour, as the wallflowers true to their name, hideaway like wallflowers while they are not flowering.

Growing wallflowers from seed is well worth the effort. The plants, with their proper root structures in place, don't sulk like the bare-rooted ones after planting. Quite often these mixed bunches are all yellow but by growing from seed you can be more sure of having your preferred colour in the spring. I have grown the Wallflower 'Blood Red'.

With little greenery left in the flower bed, bar wallflowers and sweet Williams, the garden becomes a no go area for hens. They cannot resist the small amounts of precious stagnant greenery – plants can be pecked to sticks within minutes of them being allowed out! I keep my girls in their coops until April, when the garden properly awakens and they then have the whole garden to choose from.



I have also grown *Cerithe major* from seed to overplant the tulips with. In the north they often get a hard time with the frosts, but I'm optimistic. Currently, they look good and strong, and I like their duck egg blue smooth foliage very much. We should have a show of over a 1000 tulips come the spring, and I'm still planting them.



I have yet to get into the ground a long river of the large-flowering Darwin hybrid 'Gentle Giants'. With these I am scattering the brighter lily-pink-flowering 'Dolls Minuet' and the raspberry-jam peony-flowering 'Antraciet'.



Thanks for reading and happy bulb planting!



Arthur gardens both at home in Nottinghamshire and at the Emma Bridgewater factory in Stoke on Trent.

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