

## episode 88 show notes and advice

### episode description

In this week's episode, Sarah chats to her good friend, the gardener and television presenter Alan Titchmarsh, about his great love of tulips. Revealing his favourite tulip varieties, Alan says it's often the surprising combination of colours in tulips that he really enjoys. Alan also relishes the anticipation of waiting for something to pop up in the garden, so for him, it's not just about the earlyies.

### In this episode, discover:

- Why Alan loves tulips so much
- Alan's front-runners for an impressive spring garden
- Alan's other 'must-have' bulbs

## episode 88 advice sheet

### Why Alan loves tulips:

- Colour: you've had the white snowdrops, the daffodils which are mainly yellow, and then along comes the tulip saying, "Stand back! I have far more to show you". Alan admits this is probably one reason why he never grows yellow tulips, as he's done with yellow by that time.
- Height: A most glorious tulip, 'El Niño' grows up to 3ft tall (the tallest Alan has ever grown), with lovely orange flowers splashed with red. Alan grew it in two big lead tubs this year, and notes, that as it grows older, it begins to lean "as if El Niño is blowing it over".
- Class: Tulip 'Armani' is crimson edged with white, a good-looking and classy tulip, about 2ft high.

### Alan's top tulips

- El Nino
- Tulip Armani
- Tulip Gavota
- Tulip "Mystic van Eijk"
- Tulip 'Lasting Love'

- Tulip 'Groenland'
- Tulip 'Carnaval de Nice'
- Tulip 'Snowball'
- Tulip 'New Santa'
- Tulip 'White Triumphator'
- Tulip 'Menton'
- Tulip 'White Triumphator'
- Tulip 'Spring Green'

#### **Sarah's top picks:**

- Tulip 'Slawa'
- Tulip 'Orca'
- Tulip 'Green Wave'
- Tulip 'Queen of Night'
- Tulip 'Mistress Mystic'

#### **Alan's tips for growing tulips**

Alan plants groups or clumps of tulips in borders, but also loves growing them in pots and tubs, putting 10 tulips in a 25-30cm pot. His favourite is the Tulip 'Mystic van Eijk', a dusky pink, early bloom and good in the borders.

Best for naturalising is the 'Groenland' – a pink and green version of 'Spring Green' (white and green). It will keep coming up.

#### **Alan's tips for attractive tulip displays**

- If you have one bulb left, pop it in a 3-inch terracotta pot. It'll look like something a Dutch Master might have had on his desk.
- Once it's there, it will start to get a bit wavy and wafty, but it's lovely to have

#### **Sarah's advice for styling tulips**

- Tulips look wonderful in a pattern or series
- Repeat the same size pot in succession down a table
- Bring them in and put them on a window ledge

- If the fire isn't lit, line them up along the fireplace

### **Sarah on planting tulips underneath trees**

We've found that planting tulips underneath trees, for example, under our apple tree just outside the kitchen, at the base of a south-facing hedge, they have naturalised much better than in a well-fed border. It must be so dry that the tulips feel they're in Afghanistan or wherever the tulip bulb grows freely in nature.

We have 'Mistress Mystic' (similar to 'Mistress Grey') - a strange, pearly, smoky pink. Ten years ago, we planted 50 bulbs under the apple tree, and now there are around 200-300. So, it's completely naturalised, but not in grass.

We have 'Green Wave', and 'Spring Green' naturalised in our artichoke bed. Around 10 years ago, we put in 50 bulbs of each, and without having to top up at all, this duo returns every year. The jagged petals of 'Green Wave' look fantastic with the serrated silvery leaves of the artichoke. It must be the baking heat and impoverished soil which is better than grass (for tulips). So, if you pick the right spot, you really can naturalise them.

There is no grass under the trees, just bistort and a shade-loving acanthus, which don't emerge until later in the year, so the tulips come up first.

### **Alan's other favourites**

- Allium 'Purple Sensation'
- Allium christophii
- Fritillaries
- Hyacinths
- Camassias

For more reasons why Alan and Sarah love these stunning varieties, listen to episode 88 of the podcast...

## More from Alan

### Television

Love Your Weekend with Alan Titchmarsh (Sunday morning, two-hour programme) ITV Hub  
(On the countryside and livestock, horses, dogs with celebrity guests)

### Books

Alan Titchmarsh's Gardener's Almanac

A little commonplace book, which includes things you can do this month, seasonal advice on what to grow and sow in your garden, music to play and books to read.