

Up with Orange

If it's orange you're after, tulips deliver.

Since moving to an often gloomy Willamette Valley I have become more and more enamored of the color orange. Nothing else lights up the garden in quite the same way. Of course the color orange, just like the fruit itself, is variable, and not all of the colors we label with the name are especially nice. Some of them look harsh, lifeless and cold to me, while a perfect shade of orange seems to glow from within, like a flame.

Orange is not a particularly common flower color. How many orange flowered perennials can you name, besides chrysanthemums, daylilies and kniphofias? Most of the rest are bulbous or tuberous plants — dahlias, crocosmia, Peruvian lilies, true lilies and a slew of common and uncommon spring flowering bulbs. Among these, the flowers that seem most comfortable being orange are tulips. As a group, tulips are the year's first truly showy flowers to bloom in a wide range of colors. Wherever the spring garden needs a strong shot of color, any color (well, any color but blue), there's a tulip to fill the bill.

Tulips span the entire chunk of the spectrum that could pass for orange, from almost-yellow apricot and to almost-red coral, a range that makes a perfect complement for the abundant white, yellow, blue and purple hues of springtime. I have yet to see an orange tulip I don't like, but I do have some clear favorites. Early tulips are

especially rich in orange varieties, and two of them have captured my heart. I love 'General de Wet' for its unassuming form, gentle color and sweet scent. Upstanding 'Orange Emperor' is simply stunning, in a pure, unabashed orange that is both light and vivid at the same time. It's also the tallest and largest of the early orange tulips. There is nothing like it.

Besides tulips of the Single Early class (home of 'General de Wet'), hybrid tulips for April bloom include many Triumph tulips. Among the Triumphs, 'King's Orange' and 'Annie Schiller' qualify as pure orange; 'Jan Ohms' is, to quote one of my catalogs, "a sherbety blend of sunset coral, apricot, pink and yellow." 'Toronto' drifts around catalogs looking for a home. It isn't exactly orange but I would hate for anyone to overlook it. The leaves are prettily streaked with red like a Gregii, but it's 15 inches tall and multiflowered, in a indescribable, soft yet assertive shade of — what? Definitely not pink, but pinker than salmon. Not as red as watermelon flesh. Anyway it glows, and it's a strong, reliable, perennial tulip, one of my favorites for pots.



baroque than some, named 'Orange Favorite,' a late Viridiflora, 'Golden Artist,' and the hard to classify 'Princess Irene,' deep orange with plum flames.

Most of these I have never grown, but I do grow and love the fragrant Single Late tulip 'Dillenberg,' a stately classic in a class unbeatable for long-lasting flowers. I also like the Lily Flowering 'Ballerina.' Catalog descriptions can be very misleading. Scheeper's describes 'Ballerina' as lemon yellow with scarlet red flames. Excuse me? They do grant it a 'marigold-orange and red interior.' I guess it must show through.

Look around your garden in April and early May, and see if you can find a spot for some orange tulips. Tulips need good drainage, sunshine and enough space for the foliage to die down completely before something smothers it. 'Orange Emperor,' 'Princess Irene,' 'Ballerina' and

'Dillenberg' are varieties you should find in local stores in September. Most of the other tulips I have mentioned may have to be ordered by mail or internet. Once you procure them, you have until Thanksgiving or even Christmas to plant them. But now's the time to figure out where they should go.

Rachel Foster of Eugene is a garden consultant and author of All About Gardens, a selection of past Eugene Weekly columns. She can be reached at rfoster@efn.org

Late April and early May brings a rush of main season tulips. Orange pickings are fewer, rarely fragrant and less pure in tone, but they offer lots of variety of form.

If big is your thing, there is 'Blushing Apeldoorn,' a Giant Darwin Hybrid with a reasonable record for "coming back" next year. Among doubles, there is 'Orange Princess.' Like fringed tulips? There's 'Aleppo.' There is even a parrot, a bit less

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U of O Fir Room in the EMU
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