



Associated Press

This photo courtesy of John Scheepers Beauty from Bulbs shows Prinses Irene planted in Keukenhof in Lisse, Netherlands. Fragrant tulips work best when planted near walkways, entries or in cutting gardens. Only 15 to 20 percent of all tulip varieties are fragrant, and most of those are orange or apricot in color.

Stop and smell the tulips — the fragrant ones

BY DEAN FOSDICK
ASSOCIATED PRESS

Tulips are the floral harbingers of spring, providing brilliant bursts of color in otherwise drab surroundings. But a few varieties offer another kind of bouquet, too: They're fragrant. "Tulips normally are planted in home gardens for color and form, but about 15 to 20 percent of all varieties have the added bonus of being fragrant as well," said Jo-Anne van den Berg-Ohms, the fourth-generation owner of John Scheepers Beauty from Bulbs in Bantam, Connecticut. Their scent varies, she said. "It's not strong or overpowering. Rather, it's a sweet, lingering fragrance that floats on the spring air," she said. Most fragrant tulip varieties are orange or apricot in color, van den

Berg-Ohms said, and they're sprinkled through all of the species divisions, from heirlooms to the more familiar, modern-day hybrids. "If you're interested in their fragrance, plant them in places that are traveled that time of year, especially near walkways," she said. "Take advantage of the fragrant varieties rather than planting them out in more distant areas." Cutting gardens would be perfect, she said, although there is one downside: "They really would have to be considered annuals then." That's because cutting off a tulip's foliage during or shortly after it blooms also cuts off its energy supply. That all but eliminates any chance it will flower for another season. "You may experience their fragrance lots more indoors as potted bulbs and cut flowers than you do out of doors, where

the scent can disperse," said Sally Ferguson, a spokeswoman for the flower bulb company Colorblends.com. "Probably some of this has to do with temperature. "A single pot of 'T. Monte Carlo' will scent an entire room indoors," Ferguson said. "Same is true for a few cut stems of 'Prinses Irene'." Scott Kunst, owner and head gardener at Old House Gardens in Ann Arbor, Michigan, said few of his customers know much about the floral fragrance of tulips, although he includes information about them in his catalogs every year. "Fragrance is not a trait anyone is breeding for in tulips today, and it's elusive," said Kunst, who specializes in heirloom bulbs. Among his favorites: Prince of Austria, Apricot Beauty, Generaal de

Wet, Orange Favorite, Prinses Irene, Willem van Oranje, Peach Blossom, Florentine and Elegans Alba. Some other fragrant varieties are the cherry-red miniature species Little Beauty, the double early tomato red Abba, the ivory yellow Montreaux, the unusually colored Salmon Pearl, the peony-like Black Hero and the rose-colored single late tulip variety dubbed Temple of Beauty. Some fragrant tulips are not only pleasing to the eye and nose but to the palate as well, said Becky Heath, co-owner of Brent and Becky's Bulbs in Gloucester, Virginia. "If you don't use chemicals, like us, you can use the petals of the tulips as a tasty alternative for crackers for cocktail parties," Heath said. "Orange Queen topped with a salad spread, for example."

The sweet side of growing beets

BY LEE REICH
ASSOCIATED PRESS

Red orbs are rising out of the soil in my garden, demanding to be pulled. I will pull them, but not all at once. Beets can remain in place for weeks — even months — to come if leaves or straw are thrown over them to insulate them against frigid temperatures. That's one nice thing about growing beets: You can eat them fresh for much of the year. A spring planting is ready to start harvesting by early summer, and a summer planting is ready from September on.

Some people say those early plantings must be harvested as soon as the roots are fully swollen or they'll turn old and woody. 'Tain't so. They do get old, but I find that with good growing conditions, those spring plantings stay tasty and tender right through fall.

TWO VEGETABLES FOR THE PRICE OF ONE

Another nice thing about growing beets is that they really are two savory vegetables in one. You have those red orbs hiking themselves half out of the ground, and topping them are the beet greens. Beets greens are similar to Swiss chard in flavor, texture and appearance, which is no surprise: Beets and Swiss chard (sometimes called leaf beet) are botanically the same species. And they're both in the same family as spinach, too.

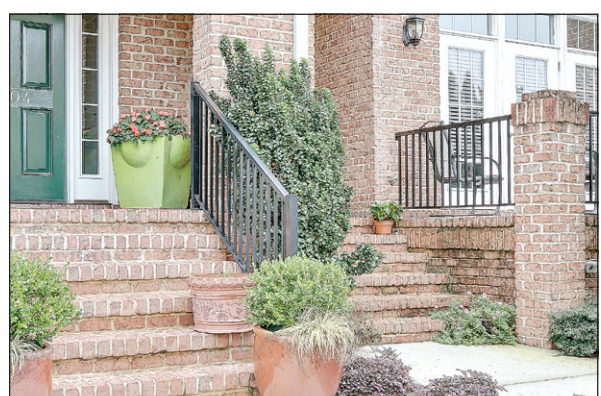
THE SEED IS A FRUIT

One not-so-nice thing about growing beets is getting the plants up and growing.

Beet seeds seem to germinate erratically, even under good growing conditions. Temperature is not usually a problem because, although beets sprout best at 85 degrees Fahrenheit, they sprout pretty well even down to 50 degrees. (Germination is poor above 95 degrees.) Some gardeners ensure a good stand of plants by sowing the seeds in flats and then transplanting (carefully!) the small seedlings. My tack is to just sow the seeds per the directions on the seed packet, then don't think about them except to water if the soil is turning dry. Eventually, enough come up. Once the plants are up, they invariably are overcrowded. That's because each beet seed is actually a fruit containing one to four, or more, seeds. When you have thinned out your beets and they're growing well, they need little care. They have potential insect and disease pests, but none usually worth noting in a backyard garden.

VARIETY IN COLOR, SHAPE, FLAVOR

Beets started out as a white-rooted wild plant growing along the shores of the Mediterranean. The plant was used by the ancients mostly for medicinal purposes. For instance, Pliny the Elder, a Roman writing in the first century, recommended beets as an antidote for garlic breath. Sometime between then and the 16th century, beets became cultivated, turned red and began to be enjoyed as a vegetable.



Above left, middle: "Interiors include granite or quartz kitchen and master bath countertops, custom cabinetry, GE Profile appliances, hardwoods, ceramic tile, crown molding in every room, lots of storage, and smooth ceilings ranging from 9' to 11'" said Marguerite Cameron and Patty Bridges. "Three plans have main level owner suites." Above right: Among an abundance of outstanding features, all homes include brick exteriors, street-front parking and rear-entry garages.

VALLEY

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Realty. "Interiors include granite or quartz kitchen and master bath countertops, custom cabinetry, GE Profile appliances, hardwoods, ceramic tile, crown molding in every room, lots of storage, and smooth ceilings ranging from 9' to 11'. Three plans have main level owner suites." Each finished home exudes spacious

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net. Information on Paran Homes may be found at [HYPERLINK "http://www.paranhomes.com"](http://www.paranhomes.com). An Open House is scheduled for Saturday

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