

## Species Tulips (*Tulipa sp.*)

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Tulips are in the genus *Tulipa*, but it often seems that the resemblance stops there. We can grow extravagant parrot tulips to miniature species tulips and everything in between. The Tulip Festivals now underway in the Willamette Valley remind us of our love for these colorful garden plants.

A bit harder to find than the giant hybrids, but perhaps even easier to grow are a group of tulips that are either still found in wild habitats or are very closely related to them. These are called collectively the “species tulips.” They tend to be smaller, some even “miniature,” but just as colorful. A distinct advantage of growing species tulips is that they often self-seed, creating a naturalized group of tulips in your garden. And they come back year after year.

So here are some to seek out. Griegg’s tulip, (*Tulipa greigii*) has a short stature (8-12”) but impressive bright red flowers; many other color forms are also available. *Tulipa tarda* is smaller, perhaps 6 inches high, and has yellow flowers tipped with white. As with many species tulips, the flowers open full and wide on a sunny day. *Tulipa kaufmanniana* is another shorter but stout species (6-8”) with selections in reds and oranges. *Tulipa clusiana* flowers range from yellow to pink and white. They are native to Central Asia and the Persian gulf, growing to only 10-12 inches high. A delicate smaller yellow and white tulip growing to only 7 inches is *Tulipa turkestanica*. For more choices, check out the following website at Iowa State University:

<http://www.ipm.iastate.edu/ipm/hortnews/1994/9-16-1994/sptul.html>

As with many of our garden species, some targeted internet searches can yield lots of information about the history and culture of tulips, so give it a try.

Most are of Mediterranean origin, so they appreciate little or no summer water and good drainage. To provide this, make sure the soil is raised slightly above the base ground level and avoid excess irrigation. These plants are welcome and colorful additions to our WaterWise gardening palette, so take the extra time to seek them out and make them part of your landscape.

