

# The Green Thumb

By GEORGE ABRAHAM

How late can you plant tulip bulbs? We've planted them as late as January and still got showy stems and blooms. However, don't wait that long because you might not have a "January thaw" and the ground could be frozen solid.

If you want a different type of tulip, why not plant some of the novel forms and colors that have come out recently. While the Darwin tulips are best known, don't overlook a newer group called the Darwin Hybrids, noted for their great vigor.

Some other good types include the lily-flowered tulip with pointed, reflexed petals; parrot tulips with fringed, and heavy petals; double petalled tulips, and there's the multiflowered types, with several heads on a stalk. Plant your tulips six or eight inches deep for best results. Some people plant them deeper, but we see no advantage. There is a disadvantage to planting them

shallow. In fact, bulb growers have an expression: "For bulb production, plant shallow, for blooms plant deep."

Planting them six to eight inches deep prolongs the useful life of the bulb, whereas shallow planting tends to cause the bulbs to reproduce, and split up into several small bulbs which do not bloom well or at all the next year.

You'll be interested to know that "tulipomania" reached its peak in Holland in the 1630s, when as much as \$1,500 was paid for paid for a single bulb—a lot of money at that time!

**RYEGRASS** for lawns? Who would ever think we have a rye grass that makes a wonderful turf, almost as delightfully fine-textured as bluegrass. We don't mean the old-fashioned coarse perennial ryegrass, but the newer varieties such as Manhattan and Penafine.

Seed of the new perennial ryegrass is large, sprouts quickly and provides a lot of seedling omph. You can even

combine Kentucky bluegrass with it for greater permanence.

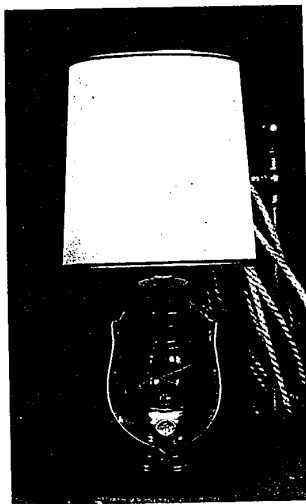
Want to know more about new lawn grasses? Send me a self-addressed, stamped envelope and ask for a copy of our bulletin, "New Lawn Grasses Applauded," prepared by the American Lawn Institute. Still time to sow grass or you can wait until spring. Be sure to read our guide.

**GREEN THUMB CLINIC:** A reader writes: "Is it true you can use wood shavings in a soil mixture? What else does it need?"

Answer: The Men's Garden Club of America offers this homemade formula: Wood shavings, one pint; perlite, one pint, peat moss, two pints, calcinated clay (kitty litter) one pint and sheep manure, one pint. Try it and tell us how you like it.

Q. "Is it true that aspirin will help keep cut flowers longer?"

Answer: No. Nor will a copper penny, as many believe.



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## Recycle Garden Waste For Soil Enrichment

Don't burn this year's garden debris! Turn it into next season's valuable organic matter by composting, suggests Douglas M. Jones, Michigan State University horticulturist.

### MSU Expert Gives Tips On Tulip Planting

Cool weather is the signal to plant tulips for next spring, says Michigan State University horticulturist William Carlson.

The weather must be cool, he explains, so the bulbs don't start to grow now.

"Bulbs may be planted in either shady or sunny areas," he says. "They should not be planted where heat from the house will make them start to grow too early."

Soil for a tulip bed should be well drained, Carlson says. If your soil is mostly clay, he advises adding peat, leafy mold or sand. To a sandy soil, add peat. Mix and work the soil thoroughly to a depth of eight to 12 inches before planting bulbs.

Weeds, plant stubble and fallen leaves may harbor insects or disease organisms if left standing, says Jones, so they should be raked away from the garden area or incorporated in the soil. This debris is a good source of organic material, heads, and should be composted, not destroyed.

To contain the compost pile, build a fence of loose concrete blocks, logs, boards or wire. Lay a portion of the material to be composted in a layer two to six inches thick. Cover this with one-half to one inch of

topsoil. The microorganisms in the topsoil will immediately begin to break down the organic matter.

The bacteria in the topsoil need nitrogen so add fertilizer to each layer of compost.

To speed decomposition, mix the pile with a pitchfork two or three times a year, Jones advises. Keep the pile moist.

If you recycle your garden wastes in this way, you will be rewarded with a continuous supply of organic material for soil enrichment, topdressing or mulch.

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## Annuals Moved Indoors

Let your wax begonias, geraniums, coleus, impatiens and other annual plants decorate the house this winter. Don't allow them to freeze outdoors or remain unseen in the attic or basement, suggest Michigan State University horticulturist Dr. J. Lee Taylor.

Pinch tops back occasionally to keep plants well-shaped, the specialist advises. Geraniums need a brightly lit area, such as a southern window, or they become tall and leggy. Wax begonias grow well in sun or shade. Most herbs such as chives and rosemary also grow well indoors.

Generously prune 1/2 to 3/4 original size, cutting stems just above nodes or buds. This causes full rather than sparse, leggy growth, Taylor explains.

Fertilize with a common fertilizer and water thoroughly when needed.

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