



SIGNS OF SPRING

Randle Siddeley on how to bring colour and life to your garden this season



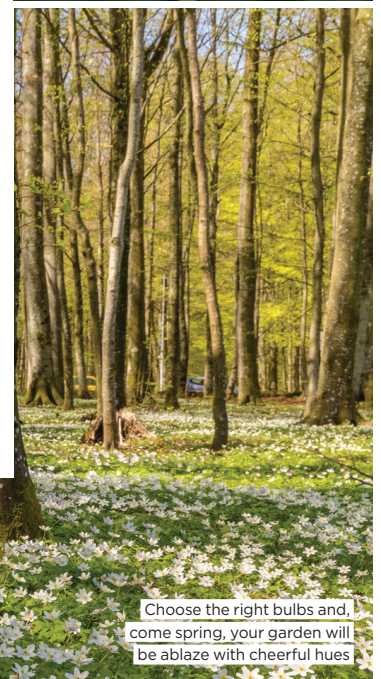
Now is the time for spring to fill us with hope and to strike out from lockdown on a long, bracing walk. Head to your nearest woods to catch that magical moment after the snowdrops and before the bluebells, when the humble anemone surprises us. If brushed by sunshine or warmth, thousands

of these tiny flowers will suddenly thrust up through the leaf litter and moss to set woodlands sparkling. There are orange, pink and red varieties, but my favourite is the white *Anemone Nemorosa*, with its delicate yellow stamens quivering upwards in search of sunlight. The *Nemorosa* has an exquisite, intricate fragility that illuminates woodland with promise and reminds us that, however bleak winter has been, evolution never halts. Plant bulbs in groups for a glimmering carpet of sheer joy.

Another harbinger of spring is the *Cornus mas*, with its mass of star-like yellow flowers erupting into life on their twigs. *Cornus* is native to Europe and parts of Asia, though is hardy and versatile and thrives here, too. This is a plant that adds drama to woodland and enlivens any drab post-winter garden with its fizzing blaze of early colour.

Of course, spring is simply not spring without tulips. My undisputed favourites are the White Parrots and Green Wave (which are in fact pink), in all their floppy, undisciplined, whimsical glory. Parrots bloom in the wake of the more severe, poker-straight varieties and their overblown, blowsy quality hints at hotter, more languid days to come. I love the way they stretch their serrated or fringed petals open wide, even flat, to the sun. Because they can droop, they're susceptible to wind and prolonged cold, so plant them in a sheltered spot and in the middle, rather than the front, of a border surrounded by supportive shrubbery so they don't collapse.

The word 'tulip' comes from the Persian word for turban, and though they are associated with the Netherlands, tulips originated in Turkey, growing in great masses along the Black Sea. Indeed, tulips were a symbol of the Ottoman Empire in the 18th century and the most highly prized of flowers. They add their exotic warmth to our chilly British spring and point the way forward to all the extravagant bounty our summer gardens will offer. randlesiddeley.co.uk ■



Choose the right bulbs and, come spring, your garden will be ablaze with cheerful hues