Bell County Master Gardeners  
Tip of the Week  
By Mary Lew Quesinberry  
“Get Ready for Spring in December”

It is not too late to plant spring blooming bulbs. Hybridized tulips that have been chilled in the refrigerator for six weeks or purchased pre-chilled can be planted now. Consider these tulips annuals. Our Texas weather is too warm for hybridized tulips to naturalize. They will need to be replaced each year. Species tulips, also known as botanical tulips, like Lady Tulip, are not sensitive to our warm weather and will naturalize. They are smaller and wilder in appearance than the hybridized varieties. Plant them in a sunny place in well-drained soil. Do not deadhead species tulips after blooming. Daffodil, Dutch Iris, Crocus, Anemones, Hyacinth, and Ranunculus bulbs do not have to be pre-chilled. They will easily naturalize in your landscape. Always buy the largest sized bulbs (number ones). They may be planted from October through December.

When planting your bulbs/corms, place the bulb down into the soil two times the height of the bulb. Avoid deep shade and fertilize with a low nitrogen, moderate phosphorous and potassium fertilizer to establish a strong root system. Let the foliage of spring blooming bulbs dry to the ground before removing. This enables the bulb to store energy for next year’s blooms.

Some perennials have dead foliage due to the past freezing temperatures. Start removing this dead foliage from your perennials now. Replenish any thin spots in your mulched areas and keep 3-4 inches of mulch around your plants to insulate them and prevent dehydration. Weather forecasters are predicting a dry winter. Remember to give your established plants one inch of water each month. Newly planted plants will need to be watered more often.

Keep leaves out of the landfill. Rake or blow leaves onto your lawn and mulch with a lawnmower to add nutrients to your soil.

Have any questions about gardening in Central Texas? Contact ask.bcmga@gmail.com

In the photo: Lady Tulip is a species tulip or botanical tulip. Species tulips originated in the mountains of Asia from Turkey to Afghanistan. They grow in warm, sunny locations to a height of 8-12 inches. They will be perennials in Texas gardens.