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33 20 FREE fritillaria bulbs - just pay postage

A word from the **Editor**
Clare Foggett



THE beautiful dahlia on our front cover is the award-winning 'Rancho' and I have to say I'm tempted. It's that lovely peachy colour that would go perfectly in my peach and purple border next to the patio. Mind you, I'm tempted by all the dahlias in Dave Bates' report from this year's National Dahlia Society trial at Leeds (page 21). You know that if the NDS have deemed them worthy of an award, these varieties are top notch!

The trials are run by volunteers and I take my hat off to them for all the effort and hard work they put in to help us make informed choices for our gardens.

I'm also very tempted by Tony Bracegirdle's pick of the best hybrid tea roses, especially the delightful 'Isn't She Lovely' from Northern Ireland's top rose breeder, Colin Dickson. Tony's bred excellent hybrid teas himself for years so I'd grow anything he recommends without hesitation! But I'm very sad to tell you that this is Tony's last column for us at Garden News as he's decided to retire and I'm sure his readers will join me in saying thank you Tony for all the inspiring, detailed and insightful rose advice you've brought us over the years.

Clare

News

Death knell tolls for busy lizzies

Top seed companies stop selling busy lizzies in a bid to halt disease



JULY LAST YEAR



JULY THIS YEAR

What a difference a year makes. Thompson & Morgan's own display was badly infected by *impatiens downy mildew* this year

Rebecca Jane
News editor

ONE of the UK's major seed companies and several commercial growers have taken the drastic step of removing common busy lizzies (*Impatiens walleriana*) from their new catalogues, following the second major outbreak of the disease that ravaged one of Britain's favourite bedding plants this summer.

Top seed company Thompson & Morgan have pulled the plug completely on busy lizzies, following a year in which their own Suffolk trial ground plants were decimated by the fast-spreading fungal disease *impatiens downy mildew*.

In a statement, Thompson & Morgan announced: "Due to the disease spreading by air, no supplier can guarantee to sell you plants of *Impatiens walleriana* that will avoid infection. Therefore, Thompson & Morgan has taken the bold move to remove one of our best-selling plants from our range during 2012, even though sales for busy lizzies in

2011 were over £1m." Paul Hansord, Thompson & Morgan's managing director, told GN: "We started to see a deterioration on our trial grounds from the second week in July. Within two weeks the plants had deteriorated quite dramatically. We then started to realise how big the problem was commercially."

Busy lizzies are grown either from seed or from cuttings, although certain varieties can't be produced from seed at all. It is thought that commercially imported cutting-raised plants were the prime source of the deadly infection coming to the UK.

Recent genetic testing has shown that the disease cannot

be carried in the seed. However, it can be carried in cuttings, and it can also remain alive in soil. So although all seed-raised plants are initially 'clean' they can easily become infected.

It is for this reason that Thompson & Morgan has halted all sales - including

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the seed-raised plants. Paul told GN it was all about the gardener: "We don't want them to go through the experience of growing the plants to find they get infected - it could ruin their gardens. I wouldn't risk growing *Impatiens walleriana* in my garden next year. It's just too big a risk."

Attempts to halt further spread of *impatiens downy mildew* are underway at all levels of the trade.

Stuart Lowen from Ball Colegrave, a commercial seed and plant distributor, told GN: "We will continue to offer other seed-raised busy lizzies, however, we will not be supplying cutting-raised *Impatiens walleriana*. It is just a suspicion but we felt that that may have been one possible route that downy mildew has come in to the UK - on imported plants."

He said that following a crisis industry meeting, a number of larger companies had 'decided to take control of the situation'.

Without companies like Ball Colegrave supplying to growers, nationwide stocks of busy lizzies will suffer. Stuart added: "It may be more challenging for consumers to find *impatiens*."

Thompson & Morgan and Ball Colegrave hope that other companies will follow their lead. Thompson & Morgan's statement said that eradicating the plant from sale would 'work towards eradicating the debilitating disease of our number one bedding plant'.

When asked if it was important that gardeners stop seeking out busy lizzies available elsewhere to prevent providing the disease with a constant supply of host plants, Paul was adamant: "Absolutely," he told GN.

Thompson & Morgan will review their busy lizzie decision for 2013.



Thompson & Morgan have dropped the popular 'Accent' variety

IMPATIENS DOWNY MILDEW - FACTS ABOUT THE DISEASE

The disease

The disease is caused by the fungus-like organism *Plasmopara obducens*. It is not related to powdery mildew. Outbreaks have been confined to *Impatiens walleriana* - the common bedding busy lizzie.

Symptoms

- Affected leaves turn yellow and are rapidly shed. A fine white fungal growth may be visible.
- Flowers fall quickly and the plant is often reduced to a skeleton with a small tuft of yellow leaves and buds at the tip. Severely affected plants will eventually die.

How it spreads

Through spores produced on the underside of infected leaves which are carried in rain and wind. Spores can live in the soil for a long time and they thrive in wet summer weather. The disease will not spread to other bedding plants.

Infected plants should be burnt immediately to prevent them infecting the soil. Do not put on compost heaps. The RHS recommend 'resting' flower beds from busy lizzies for at least a year after an outbreak.

Research by the Horticultural Development Company has found that the spores can even survive harsh winters to re-infect in the spring.

Major outbreaks

It was first discovered in 2003 with the first major outbreak in 2008. This summer saw the disease rear its head again, but far more severely than in 2008. Many gardens, nurseries and council displays were affected.

Control

There are no fungicides available to home gardeners.

Safe from infection!

No cases have been found on New Guinea *impatiens*, *Impatiens hawkeri*, or on wild species of *impatiens* - including Himalayan balsam and *Impatiens glandulifera*.



Many horticulturists think the risk of fungal disease is just too great to grow *Impatiens walleriana*

Tipped for the top in 2012



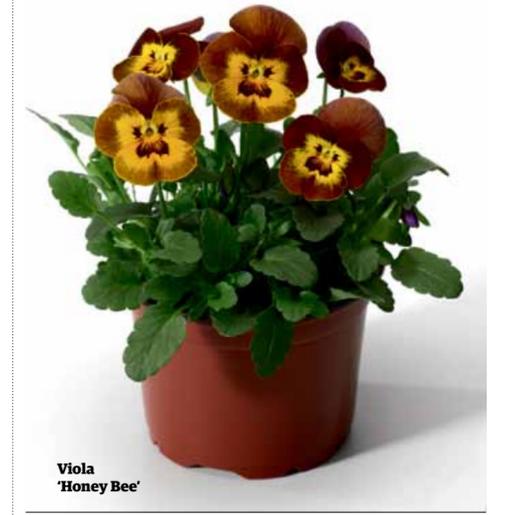
NEW viola 'Honey Bee' is already creating a big buzz. Professional growers are already predicting that this new, unusually-coloured viola will be next year's big hit in garden centres.

In fact, the plant's breeders, who sell seed on to the growers, which then supply garden centres with plug plants, have already sold out of their seed stock. And garden centres are snapping the new viola up, putting in huge orders for their spring season.

"Its unique colour and catchy name have encouraged (retailers) to buy 'Honey Bee' in great quantities," said Walter Back of professional growers Blue Ribbon Plants in Chichester, who will be supplying garden centres around the country with the new viola in spring.

'Honey Bee' is a *Viola cornuta* from the Deltini™ series. The breeders, Syngenta, describe it as 'the next generation of *Viola cornuta*'. It produces very compact, tidy plants that are bushy and upright with a very uniform habit. It's also an early flowering variety and particularly full of blooms with masses of smaller (3-4cm/1-1/2in) flowers.

Seven more Deltini™ violas will be available in garden centres in spring. As well as 'Honey Bee' there is the white and purple 'Cutty'; the contrasting 'Yellow and Purple' bicolor; the bright 'Blue Beacon'; and the rich dark 'Violet Blue', 'Neon Violet' and 'Blue with Purple Wing'.



Viola 'Honey Bee'

Aquilegias help solve the pollination riddle



their long tongues, go for the long spurs of *A. longissima*. They discovered all aquilegia look the same until the spur is about 5mm long. After that, the plants' cells can change - elongating themselves to create longer spurs in species that attract longer-tongued pollinators.

SCIENTISTS are one step closer to solving a puzzle that has been baffling horticulturalists - how flowers adapt themselves to match the needs of different pollinators.

Looking at aquilegias, American researchers from Harvard University and the University of California studied how the flowers grow different length spurs to suit different insects. They noticed that bees prefer the short spurs of *A. vulgaris*, but hawk moths, with

WHAT'S HOT

The Big Tree Plant

One year after announcing plans to plant one million new trees in urban areas across England by 2015, the Government say they are well on track. Minister for Agriculture and Food, Jim Paice, said: "So many people have got involved, planting new trees in England's urban areas and creating neighbourhoods to be proud of. The campaign has already seen over 100,000 trees planted, with another 400,000 pledged to follow."

Exbury

Exbury, in the New Forest, has been named the best garden to visit in the UK in the first national Hudson's Heritage Awards. The 200-acre woodland gardens won for its maintenance and improvement and also in recognition of its contribution to horticultural science, knowledge and learning.



WHAT'S NOT

Tall Christmas trees

People looking for a last minute tall Christmas tree might be disappointed this year, as tree growers say there is a shortage of trees between 2m and 3m (7-10ft) tall. The British Tree Growers Association says Nordmann Fir and Norway spruce are in short supply due to a lull in growing seven years ago and that also the growers had been cutting trees earlier in their growth.



Awake hedgehogs

The mild weather in November and early December has meant that many hedgehogs have been fooled by the temperatures and may still be awake looking in gardens for food, using up energy that should be conserved for hibernation. Any hedgehogs that are found awake in the daytime, might be ill or very vulnerable, say the British Hedgehog Preservation Society (01584 890801).