



*We Love March*  
*for the seduction of early spring*

**Traditionally, this is the month** of the mad March hare – not named after the one at the Mad Hatter’s Tea Party in *Alice in Wonderland*, but so-called because they can be seen in the countryside boxing (it is the females doing the punching), leaping and generally cavorting. It will come as no surprise that this is another example of nature getting into the mood for love as the weather warms. Be assured that the seductive feeling will be coming to your garden any day now: brace yourselves for an influx of fertility and flower. Winter is over; long live the gusts of spring.

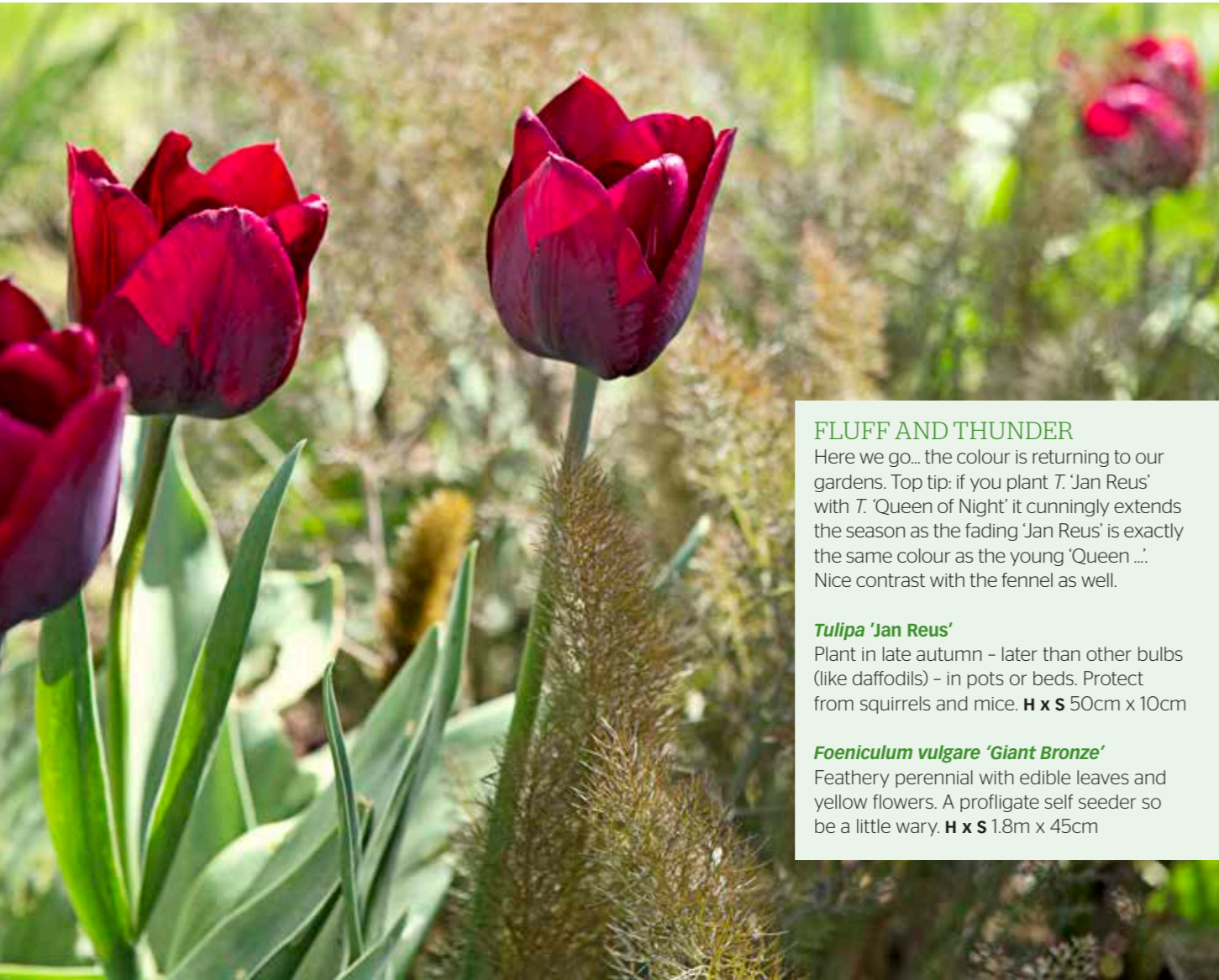
**Words by James Alexander-Sinclair**

**STAR OF THE MONTH**  
*Primula acaulis*

There was a brief moment in my adolescence when I eschewed the traditional teenage allure of both Black Sabbath and Pink Floyd, and instead listened to a lot of Gilbert and Sullivan operettas: with hindsight, a trifle weird I know. I mention it only because this gathering of almost identical pots reminds me of the song ‘Three little maids from school are we’ from *The Mikado* (sung by the kimono clad Yum-Yum, Peep-Bo and Pitti-Sing). Few would disagree with the aptness of describing these primula as “Pert as a schoolgirl well can be/Filled to the brim with girlish glee”.

Happy in semi-shade and does well in both pots and borders, especially if planted with well-rotted manure. Divide every couple of years. **Height x Spread** 10cm x 10cm

PHOTO: SARAH CUTTLE



**FLUFF AND THUNDER**

Here we go... the colour is returning to our gardens. Top tip: if you plant T. 'Jan Reus' with T. 'Queen of Night' it cunningly extends the season as the fading 'Jan Reus' is exactly the same colour as the young 'Queen ...'. Nice contrast with the fennel as well.

***Tulipa 'Jan Reus'***

Plant in late autumn - later than other bulbs (like daffodils) - in pots or beds. Protect from squirrels and mice. **H x S** 50cm x 10cm

***Foeniculum vulgare 'Giant Bronze'***

Feathery perennial with edible leaves and yellow flowers. A profligate self seeder so be a little wary. **H x S** 1.8m x 45cm

**FIRE DOWN BELOW**

It seems unfair that the wallflower has been adopted to signify those moments we have all experienced when you hang around the edge of a dance floor feeling deeply awkward, trying to pluck up the courage needed to get out there. No such worries here: it is vibrant, sparkling and unstoppable. Be it Paso Doble or the Mashed Potato, this is a wallflower that will certainly cut one heck of a rug.

***Erysimum cheiri 'Orange Bedder'***

Strikes easily from cuttings in spring or summer. Related to cabbages so susceptible to club root. Must have full sun. **H x S** 30cm x 30cm



**LONELY GOATHERD**

This is pussy willow, although I have always thought that the fluffy buds were more like the ears of rabbits than anything feline. Just to confuse the zoology even more, it is also known as goat willow because it was used as goat food. However, if we ignore the larger mammals this is a fantastic plant for bees of all shapes and sizes who queue up to harvest the pollen.

***Salix caprea***

Male and female catkins are produced on separate plants - males are showier. Takes easily from cuttings plunged in beds or pots outside. Good coastal or wild plant. **H x S** 10m x 6m



### JONQUIL SERENADE

One of the most elegant and charming narcissi, this is a Jonquil variety which means that it has clusters of flowers on each stem (up to three) rather than big, loud, single trumpets. This particular charmer is unusual as, if you look very closely into the flower, you can see that the centre is as green as the eyes of Julianne Moore (or, for the sake of equality, John Hamm)

#### *Narcissus 'Lieke'*

Sensational in pots or borders. Plant in the autumn and allow foliage to die back naturally in the spring. **H x S** 30cm x 10cm

### YELLOW MEADOW

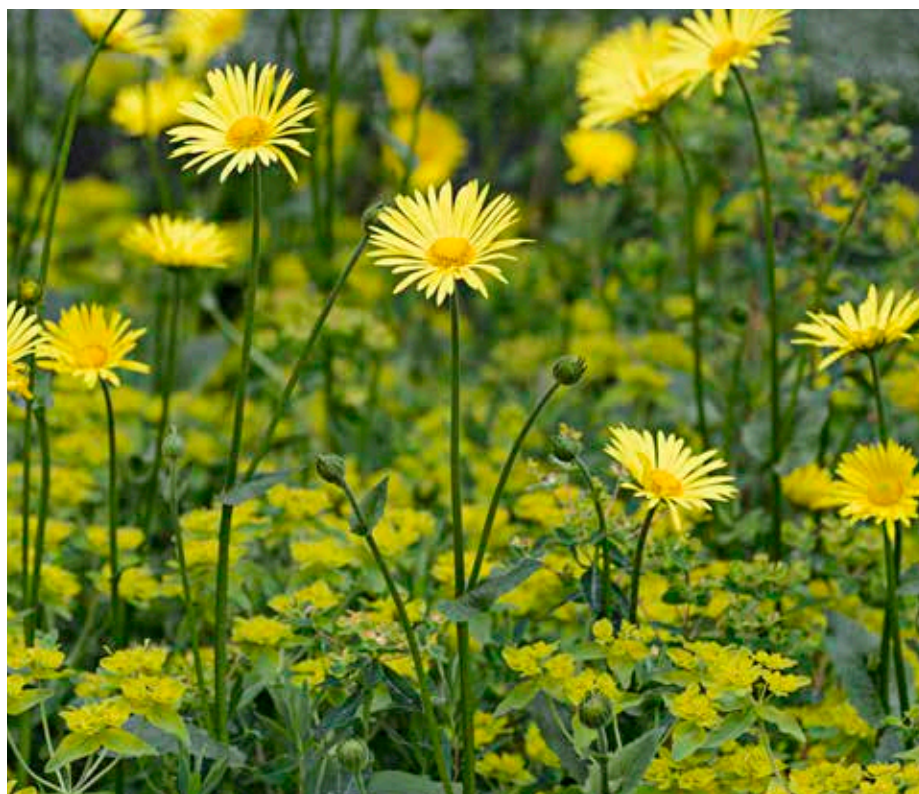
You would think that at this time of year with daffodils everywhere we would not need any more yellow. You would be wrong. This little combination has a very different feel and brings another timbre of smiling sunshine to our gardens. A bit more subtle than a bank of daffs.

#### *Doronicum orientale*

Best on a free-draining soil in a spot of shade. Deadhead as flowers fade for second flush. Divide in autumn. **H x S** 60cm x 60cm

#### *Euphorbia epithymoides*

Be careful when cutting as sap can burn sensitive skins. Prune to ground level in autumn. Divide in spring. **H x S** 40cm x 60cm



PHOTOS: SARAH CUTTLE, JASON INGRAM