

Tulbaghia violacea - Care Guide

Caring For Tulbaghia Violacea

There are times in the winter especially in colder weather when you enter the greenhouse or polytunnel and pause to wonder what is causing a rather poignant onion like smell. This is being produced by the remaining foliage and rhizomes of Tulbaghia violacea which are becoming dormant.

Tulbaghia violacea is a semi-evergreen perennial from temperate areas in South Africa. It is a vigorous clump forming greenhouse or outdoor plant in milder areas. Although you might expect it to be bulbous it in fact has corm like rhizomes.

T. violacea has narrow grey-green leaves of up to 12in in length. The flowers appear from July to September as long terminal umbels of fragrant lilac flowers. Again the scent is a mixture of onion and garlic. The flower stalks are 18-24in tall and stand proud to the leaves. The contrast between the lilac flowers and grey-green leaves is highly effective in a pot or in the border.

This plant will tolerate temperatures as low as minus 10°C for short periods and, although the leaves will disappear, the rhizomes remain intact and alive. In the greenhouse grow in a well-drained loamy compost in full light rather than semi shade. Water copiously when in full growth and sparingly over winter as dormancy approaches and the leaves wither. Outdoors the plants, which will soon form a clump, can be covered with a mulch for winter protection.

The rhizomes can be divided and split in early spring or you can collect seed in late autumn. This germinates easily and the seedlings can achieve flowering size in less than a year if regularly potted on. Whitefly and red spider mite can be a problem under glass. If the plants come

under threat from these pests stand the pots outside for a couple of weeks and the problem will reduce.



TULBAGHIA violacea 'silver lace'



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Burncoose Nurseries: Gwennap, Redruth, Cornwall TR16 6BJ

Telephone: +44 (0) 1209 860316 Fax: +44 (0) 1209 860011 Email: info@burncoose.co.uk

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