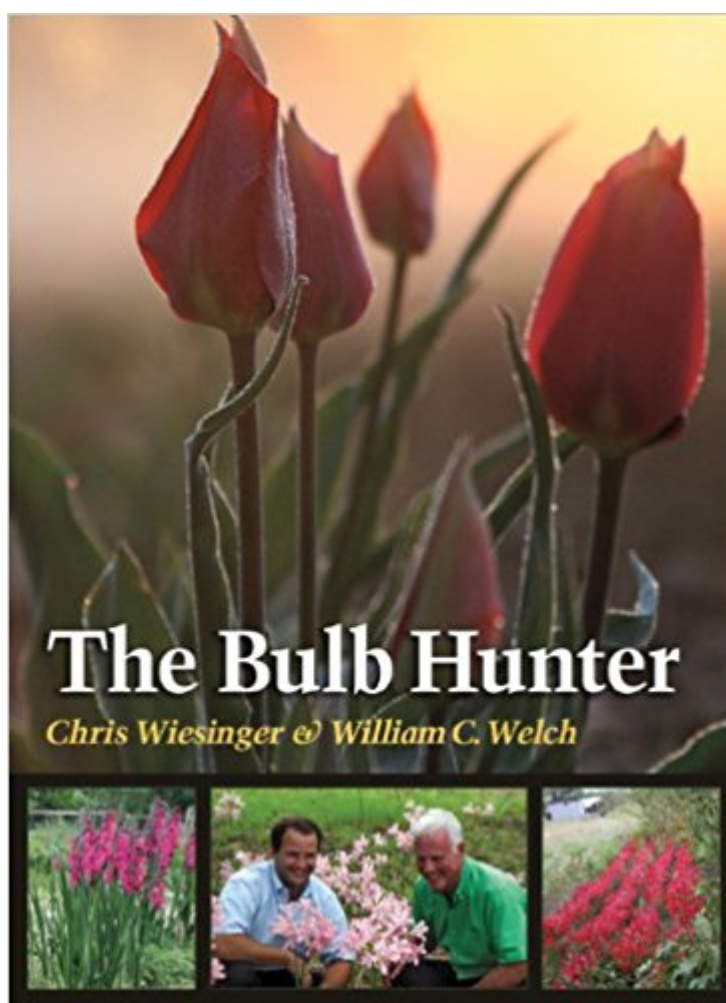


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# The Bulb Hunter (Texas A&M AgriLife Research And Extension Service Series)



## Synopsis

Dubbed the Bulb Hunter in a 2006 New York Times feature story, Chris Wiesinger took his passion for bulbs to vacant lots, abandoned houses, cemeteries, and construction sites throughout the South in search of botanical survivors whose descendants had never seen the inside of a big-box chain store. The vintage specimens Wiesinger sought came from hardy, historic stock, adapted to human neglect and hot climates, reappearing faithfully over decades without care or cultivation. Traveling back roads, speaking to strangers, looking for the telltale color of a remnant iris or lily, Wiesinger started digging, then began trying to grow and share the bulbs he collected. From its humble beginnings on an East Texas sweet potato farm, his Southern Bulb Company has now grown into a full-fledged business known throughout the world, propagating and selling the rare, tough, heritage plants Wiesinger still seeks out and champions. Nicknamed "Flower" by his fellow cadets at Texas A&M University, Wiesinger relates his adventures in bulb hunting, telling stories of the bulbs he has discovered and weaving in his own life story as a student, plantsman, and small business owner. He then teams with veteran horticulturist William C. Welch to provide advice on how to grow and appreciate the bulbs that have been rescued and reintroduced. This "primer" gives gardeners information on what bulbs to grow where, when to plant them and when they bloom, and how to incorporate them with other plants in the landscape. Finally, Welch describes how bulbs have enhanced his personal gardens and brought him and Wiesinger together in the common cause of heirloom gardening. Entertaining, informative, and loaded with beautiful photographs, The Bulb Hunter is sure to be a favorite of gardeners and plant lovers everywhere.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Wiesinger makes a living finding pretty things in ravaged places. . . . While the pursuit of heirloom botanicals may have an air of elitism about it, [he] goes after what one might think of as the Barbara Stanwycks of floriculture: resilient flowers without patrician connotation that thrive in areas largely lost to the economic revival of the New South. His is the world of old cotton towns, condemned properties, abandoned buildings and houses where torn sofas crest on bowed porch fronts." --[New York Times \(New York Times\)](#)"In his latest book, the bulb hunter weaves tales of his quest for these plant survivors with endearing stories from his personal life. And he teams with mentor and Texas A&M horticulturist Bill Welch to give gardeners the how-to on growing the treasured bulbs." --Kathy Huber ([Houston Chronicle 2013-12-09](#))"Special-interest gardeners may want to try a book on bulbs that grow well here. Christ Wiesinger, and expert on this subject, has a book out called *The Bulb Hunter* that they would love." --Melody Fitzgerald ([Melody Fitzgerald Waco Tribune](#))"[Wiesinger] shares his knowledge of different species with fellow gardeners in friendly prose. Educator and horticulturist William Welch offers some practical tips on naturalizing bulbs. Clear photographs provide the reader with excellent portraits of some of these rare specimens." --Marilyn K. Alaimo. ([Chicago Botanic](#))"I recommend *The Bulb Hunter* for any warm-climate gardener, bulb nut, or anyone who enjoys a behind-the-scenes look at starting a garden-related business. It's also for those who love stories about people who are passionate about plants." --Pam Penick ([Pam Penick](#))"This is a lively and revealing account spiced with over a hundred color panels and plenty of gardening and botanical insights, perfect for science, home and garden and general-interest readers alike." --[The Midwest Book Review \(The Midwest Book Review 2014-02-01\)](#)

CHRIS WIESINGER is the owner of the Southern Bulb Company, near Tyler, Texas (featured in the *New York Times*, *Southern Living*, and *House and Garden*), where he farms and sells bulbs. He speaks to gardening groups throughout the country. WILLIAM C. WELCH is professor and Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service landscape horticulturist in College Station. He is a regular contributor to *Southern Living* and frequent speaker to gardening groups across the US.

This is an educational and great book for any gardener who is interested in historical bulbs. It is very well written and filled with information that is useful to any level gardener. The illustrations are superior. It is particularly useful to a southern gardener.

Very informative, well written book. The best I've read in a long time

Good read and very knowledgeable about all bulbs . I will be looking for spring bulbs soon. Good history for Texas heirloom school house lillies. I have e been given about 50 and they are doing well.

Chris Wiesinger shares his love and appreciation for all kinds of bulbs as well as how to propagate them. It is a continuation of his story of how he came to love bulbs.

Read a review in the newspaper, bought it as a gift for a gardener. She loves it, and is going to buy a copy for another gardener!

Chris Wiesinger is a genius with bulbs! Imagine earning your living from raising bulbs that have been 'rescued' from neglect. Chris has done that, and takes us along that path in this book.

I garden on red clay and a budget, so I hesitated buying this book. After all, I have the other classic books on growing bulbs in the South, and they have not exactly turned my bulb-growing life into happy fields of yellow--at least not the bulbs I've spent a lifetime transplanting from old house places and ditches. And those are the ones I want to grow. Roses like red clay; bulbs not so much. Nor do they like the shade so abundant in my garden. So why another book on Southern bulb growing? Because I am an optimist and know I can turn these bulbs into the power stations they can be. And it just seemed so interesting that I couldn't resist. I'm a sucker for that Texas A&M gardening crowd. And oh golly gee whiz! am I glad that I did not resist. For this is a terrific book for anyone who gardens or thinks about gardening when not actually wielding a shovel or trowel. It is also a fine book for anybody who has ever had his life shaped by a quest or enjoys reading about the quests that shaped the lives of others. Especially someone who would also like to grow bulbs that will thrive in the heat of the American South. Chris Wiesinger is one of a number of students who fell under the genius of Dr. William Welch at Texas A & M and went on to change the face of contemporary Southern gardening. Welch's passion for plant history and for finding plants suited to the blazing

summers of the South, encouraging others to propagate and market them has been infectious. It created a community of people who spoke at garden clubs and horticultural societies, who traveled the back roads of the South looking for the old plants that had survived neglect and continued to grow, who developed new and tougher varieties of old perennials, and who always had an eye out for the other's special passion. Wiesinger's passion was a perennial red tulip of which he'd heard and had himself seen a single specimen. He'd believed, as most believe, that tulips do not perennialize in the South. Tulip bulbs require a sustained period of cold for the bulb to go dormant, and they do not find that in southern gardens. And yet there was that tulip and tales of others. In search of it, Wiesinger came upon other plants growing from bulbs in cemeteries, in fields, and in straight lines along the sides of what had once been walkways. Narcissus and daffodils, the surprise lillies of September (lycoris), little French hyacinths and nodding snowflakes---all found their way into his propagation beds.. Living in a tiny, primitive cabin in East Texas and driving all over the South looking for bulbs, Wiesinger became a knowledgeable grower of heirloom bulbs. In the course of his searches and digging and planting, he learned their preferences and habits. And he learned that to market them at reasonable prices, he needed to secure some other growers so that he might continue his hunts and market these new bulbs. In other words, he became a professional. And yet he has not lost the passion and excitement of the amateur, and it shows in the way he tells his story and talks about the bulbs he grows in Texas. Writing in his own distinctive voice, he describes his early years living in the cold-water cabin and putting miles on his truck looking for bulbs and planting them in long straight rows in the East Texas soil adjacent to the cabin. His encounters with landowners of various dispositions, Welch's pushing him at just the right times, his courtship and marriage to a young woman as feisty as he, on to the elusive red tulip and the foundation of a solid business providing easy-to-grow heirloom bulbs to the great-grandchildren of the people who first planted them---he tells all of this with such easy familiarity that the reader feels part of his enterprise and the life to which it led him. Another reviewer said she could not say exactly what it was that gripped her attention, but that others would understand if they purchased the book. In part I think it is the author's candor and forthright narrative style. The reader is party to an easy, ongoing conversation about horticulture and the way it shaped one man's life and is changing one horticultural market. To appreciate the meaning of Wiesinger's work, it helps to know that only one other firm in the U.S., Old House Gardens, is devoted solely to the marketing of heirloom bulbs, and while it features bulbs for the South, more than half its list is not appropriate to Southern gardens. So the need for a Southern firm has long been felt. Wiesinger is a pioneer. The second part of the book is written by Dr. Welch, and focuses more on Welch's Northeast Louisiana

garden, the inheritance of his late wife, where Welch has spent much time for years. It too has a personal tone and contains the adventures of the hunt. Moreover, Welch discusses how to use various bulbs in the landscape to create pleasing, nearly year-round beauty. The gardening guidance is a part of a narrative, not separated. And the reader is more likely to recall it because it has context. Engaging. That's what "The Bulb Hunter" is. From the outset, the reader invests his hopes in a young man's adventures that lead to a true vocation and purpose and knits all the parts of his life together. I am happy to have this authoritative and happy book in my library. I could not put it down, and I will pick it up many, many times in the future. It is nicely illustrated with photography. It is the sort of book you will keep out if you are a gardener. I recommend it without reservation

A welcomed Christmas gift, "The Bulb Hunter" has been a welcome addition to my library. The prose is actually one man's tale of love; Chris' passion for bulbs, and the tale of meeting and marrying his beautiful wife. Bill Welch's valuable information was the icing on the cake. Recently building a new home, and wanting to plant as many heirloom plants as possible, this book has been a valuable resource for heirloom bulbs that will grow near the Gulf Coast of Texas. I'm now anxious to begin my search for bulbs that will work in my flower beds. Thanks and Gig 'Em gentlemen!!!

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