



# News Release

**For release:** Immediately

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## **Process of turning bare garden beds into Tulip Time next spring begins now**

TOPEKA, KAN. – Tulip Time is a popular rite of spring in Shawnee County but the process of bringing more than 100,000 multi-colored flowers to Shawnee County Park + Recreation’s public gardens begins in late October/early November each year. This Friday from 9 a.m.-3 p.m. and next Tuesday from 9 a.m. to noon at Ted Ensley Gardens volunteers will take part in the process of creating Tulip Time 2018 by planting bulbs in Ted Ensley Gardens.

Dave Bartels, SCP+R horticulture supervisor, calls it the “great transition” from fall to winter in the gardens – the time after the first frost when his staff and volunteers from Keep America Beautiful, Target, Westar, Advisors Excel, Friends of the Gardens groups and a bevy of regular garden volunteers help five horticulturists and their crew remove annual plants, and then till and amend the soil so the tulip bulbs can be planted. Bartels estimates that the process takes more than 1,000 hours. After about three weeks of work, the planting beds are covered with netting and manure and watered one more time before irrigation is turned off for the year.

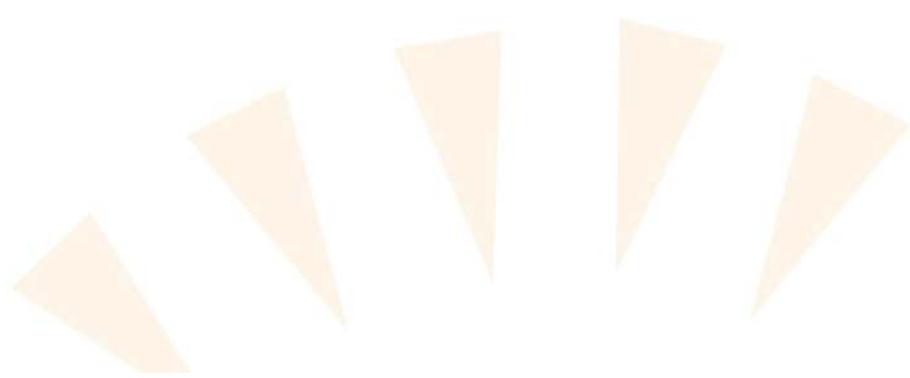
“The work is worth it,” notes Bartels despite the sore knees and backs it brings. “In the spring, everyone who has put in the time will feel the overwhelming elation that comes with knowing the part they have played in the beauty created.”

The bulbs planted include 56,700 at Ted Ensley Gardens and the Arboretum at Lake Shawnee, 34,200 at Old Prairie Town/Ward-Meade Botanical Garden and 21,500 in Doran Rock Garden and the entrances to Gage Park. In all of those areas, 45,000 hyacinths and daffodils are also planted. These bulbs come up and often bloom before the main group of tulips bloom and therefore extend the spring blooming season in the parks.

Each spring, Bartels and his horticulturists gather to grade the tulip choices they made the previous year. The thought process for the next year has already begun.

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“The process [of selecting tulip bulbs] includes how the soil is reacting to all of the yearly planting activity as soil needs to rest at some point,” explains Bartels. “Other considerations include how tall tulips will get, what color they are, and whether varieties of tulips are early, middle or late season blooming.”

The team makes its final bulb choices in July and the tulips arrive in mid-October.

Tulip Time is the largest fundraiser for the garden areas each year. Bartels says that without the proceeds of Tulip Time over many years, Ted Ensley Gardens would still be a 3-acre plot with rose beds. Today, the garden area encompasses 9.5 acres.

“The gardens attach an individual to a communion with nature,” says Bartels, “water, sky, butterflies and flowers. The area is heavily used during the growing season and even in the winter as walkers stroll through on snowy days.”

Each garden area has donation boxes and volunteers collect donations at Ted Ensley Gardens and Old Prairie Town/Ward Meade Botanical Garden during Tulip Time. The “Friends Groups” for the gardens help the Shawnee County Parks and Recreation Foundation raise endowments for the gardens to maintain and improve them in the future. The friends groups have created the Tulip Time Festival at the Lake at Ted Ensley Gardens and Tulips at Twilight at Ward-Meade Botanical Garden to enhance the Tulip Time experience and bring additional funds into the foundation.

“The end result is that people from all over the country and especially our five-state area come to see our gardens,” says Bartels, calling it a “win” for Topeka and Shawnee County.

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Shawnee County Parks + Recreation includes more than 50 miles of trails, 2,625 acres of parks and 320 annual days of sporting activities. In addition, the department offers recreation programs, educational programs and golf. A combination of tax dollars, user fees and private donations enables Shawnee County Parks + Recreation to offer parks, sporting and aquatic facilities with state-of-the-art features, and beautiful, nationally recognized gardens.

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