

Bulb shortages hit home

29 October 2018, by Matthew Appleby

Some garden centres are sold out of spring bulbs after a 40% shortfall in harvests because of the dry weather this year.



Boston Bulbs Wholesale's Gary Huggins said early bulbs such as daffodils were worst hit: "Most wholesale companies will be out of stocks six weeks earlier than anticipated. We've got virtually nothing left and have not had the range for a while. Other companies are the same. There may appear to be product in the retail sector but for planting for landscape and councils a lot of product is not available. And for garden centre customers, repeat sales product is not available. We're 60 tonnes short of yellow daffodil varieties and I can't see things improving greatly for the next year. The amount of planting stock that has gone back in is not at the levels of the past. The numbers of growers are getting less and less."

He said cut flower growers are mainly interested in yellow varieties and other varieties would suffer because nurseries will stop growing them. Prices have not risen in 15 years and because of the dry ground three-quarters of what was dug was soil rather than bulbs, making it uneconomic to clean.

Some garden centres such as National Trust Morden Hall are reporting being sold out, while suppliers such as Taylors have also almost run out of daffodil bulbs.

Instead of 240,000 tonnes of narcissi in the warehouses, there were only 70,000 tonnes.

Varieties hit hard include 'White Mounthood', 'Las Vegas' and 'Anniversary Gift'. Kieft, M Toolen, Taylors and De Ree have also all reported issues with supply this year.

Huggins added that there will not be the volumes to meet full demand next year. There will be fewer white and bicolour varieties especially.

He added: "There are going to be immense shortages of most types of bulbs across the board, as a lot of products haven't produced the levels of crop that was anticipated. In fact, there is as much as 40% shortfall in the overall harvest of bulb varieties.

"There will be limited availability in the latter part of the year. There are going to be less of the larger sizes of bulbs available for a start because they just haven't been produced. This is because there has been insufficient moisture needed to create that size of bulb, and therefore the people who would normally buy the largest size of bulb are going to end up of having to buy the next size down, meaning there will be less available for those who would normally buy that size, so they in turn will have to buy the next size down. Thus, a chain reaction will be triggered.

"So, when it comes to tulips for example, around 85% of all tulip bulbs grown are for the cut flower market. Only 15% of tulip bulbs are produced for dry bulb sale. So, if the cut flower market can't get the size of bulb they need, they'll have to make do with other bulb sizes instead, meaning there will be less bulbs available for the dry bulb market.

"Limited availability is bound to mean price increases, so we advise that people get their orders in early so as not to be disappointed."

The issue is set to be aired on Radio 4's You and Yours on Thursday.