

Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Tulips*

Botany 101

- The word *tulip* is derived from the Turkish word *tülbend* meaning turban. It is the unofficial flower of the Netherlands, where it has been cultivated since the 17th century.
- The tulip belongs to the Lily family, which includes onions, garlic and asparagus in its family tree. Tulips are grouped by its flower structure and size into one of 15 divisions.
- The tulip is a perennial bulb that requires a prolonged cold period in order to flower. Bulbs should be planted in autumn for spring blooms, but tulip bulbs can be “forced” to bloom by chilling or refrigerating the bulbs.
- The most coveted tulips during Dutch Tulipmania – like Augustus Semper (*pictured*) – are called broken tulips. Although not discovered until centuries later, a virus in the bulb caused this break in color. Today’s variegated tulips may appear “broken,” but this is the result of breeding, not a virus.
- During World War II, in Nazi occupied Netherlands, German blockades caused a food shortage that led to Hungerwinter (“Hunger winter”). Some Dutch ate tulip bulbs in a desperate effort to stay alive. Reportedly 18,000 people died from starvation and malnutrition during the winter of 1944-1945.



History 101

- Tulips originated in the Himalayan Highlands where Turks discovered them and brought them east.
- Turkey experienced its own Tulipmania in the early 16th century during the Ottoman Empire. The Sultan and his Court prized the tulip so much they held lavish parties when they bloomed. This is where the tulip first became associated with wealth, power and prestige.
- Botanist Carolus Clusius is credited with bringing the tulip to Holland, where he studied it, developed new varieties, and planted an impressive display in the Botanical Gardens at Leiden. When Clusius refused to sell his tulip bulbs people began stealing this symbol of prosperity.
- Once freed from royal gardens, enterprising Dutchmen began growing tulip bulbs and selling them on the open market to the highest bidder. As demand for tulips grew, prices increased, and by the 1630s, many believed they had found the perfect get rich quick scheme.
- This period of wild speculation is known as “Tulipmania.” At its peak from 1636-1637, a single bulb could cost more than a house in Amsterdam. The tulip market crashed when buyers stopped buying bulbs due to the inflated prices. As demand evaporated, prices plummeted, and the bubble burst.

Today

- The tulip is as popular as ever with over 3,000 registered varieties available around the world.
- Red is the most popular color, while the “Queen of the Night” is the most famous tulip variety. This deep purple tulip, first introduced in 1944, is the closest breeders have come over the centuries to creating a black tulip. “Queen of the Night” is just one of more than 135 tulip varieties available from COLORBLEND, a flowerbulb wholesaler based in Bridgeport, Conn, that specializes in creating pre-blended tulip bulb collections that create jaw-dropping spring flower displays.
- Visit the all new Amsterdam Tulip Museum (ATM) to learn more fascinating tulip facts. Click <http://www.amsterdamtulipmuseum.com> for museum and admission information. Members of the press may visit <http://www.tulipmania2012.com> for the latest ATM reopening news.

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