



# Tulips

**Origin:** Turkey and Central Asia

The word tulip comes from the Turkish word for turban! The Turks were renowned for their tulips for 150 years until the Dutch became enamored with tulips in the seventeenth century. The period of 1634-1637 was known as the “Dutch Golden Age” and is frequently

referred to as “tulipomania”! The most sought after tulips were the “broken varieties” which were later called Rembrandts. These are the lovely tulips with flaming and feathering and contrasting base color. This variation in color was due to a Tulip Mosaic virus infection and because of the virus no one could tell how the flower from a new bulb would be colored or marked. During this period prices for prized tulips skyrocketed and if cash was not available to pay various other goods were offered. One extreme example of all was the selling of one ‘Viceroy’ bulb for two loads of wheat, four loads of rye, four oxen, eight fat pigs, twelve sheep, two barrels of butter, a thousand pounds of cheese, two hogsheads of wine, four barrels of beer, a special silver beaker, a suit of clothes, and a complete bed all of which equaled about 2,500 florins. Later one ‘Semper Augustus’ sold for nearly 5,000 florins plus a new carriage and pair of horses. ( “Tulips” by Ann Bonar)

This tulipomania is generally considered the “first recorded speculative bubble”. The term “tulip mania” is now often used metaphorically to refer to any large economic bubble when asset prices deviate from intrinsic values. Tulip mania collapse began in Haarlem when for the first time buyers apparently refused to show up at a routine bulb auction. This may have been because Haarlem was suffering from an outbreak of the bubonic plague. The existence of the plague may have helped to create a culture of fatalistic risk-taking that allowed the speculation to skyrocket in the first place; this outbreak may also have helped to burst the bubble. ( Wikipedia) I also think that people were realizing that the bulbs didn’t breed true so there wasn’t a guarantee that the bulbs would be the same as the parent bulb.

**Categories:** A succession of species and other varieties can provide color for about 14 weeks.

1. Early Flowering: includes both species tulips and single-flowered garden tulips
  - a. Tulip fosteriana- native to Central Asia and has the largest flowers of any of the species tulips, about ten inches wide when fully opened and brilliant red
  - b. Tulip kaufmanniana- sometimes called the “water lily” tulip as the pointed white or pale-yellow petals turn back widely in the sun from a flower that is cone shaped when closed. It is the first tulip to bloom in early spring.
  - c. Single early hybrids characterized by flowers that have rounded petal tips and rounded bases. These do well in containers.
2. Midseason Tulips: Tulip greigii and hybrids derived from it, double-flowered hybrids, the Darwin hybrids and the Triumph tulips. All do well in cooler gardens and exposed positions, as they are extremely hardy and strong enough to stand up to high winds.
3. Late-Flowering Tulips: This category contains the majority of the garden tulips. The biggest group is the Darwins, named after Charles Darwin since they were introduced shortly after he died. Average height: 24-28 inches; longest lasting and they make excellent cut flowers. They are usually of a single color.

Cottage tulips are now included in this category. They are a mixture of garden varieties that were grown in cottage gardens in the 17th century and until recently were treated as a distinct class.

Also have Lily-Flowered tulips, fringed tulips, viridiflora tulips ( green band on petals), Rembrandt tulips ( which have been infected with a virus by aphids, which carry the disease from plant to plant so plant these tulips separately from other tulips), Parrot Hybrids, Double late tulips and Multiflora tulips.

### **Care and Cultivation of Tulips:**

1. Plant in mid-fall or early in late fall.
2. If buying bulbs from a local store, look for ones that have a circumference of about 4 1/2 inches, the bulb should be firm, not misshapen or marred by disease spots.
3. Soil Preparation: tulips need good drainage. Our heavy clay soil makes the bulbs susceptible to infection by soil born fungal diseases resulting in rotting. We need to improve our soil by mixing in two or three handfuls of course sand or grit per square yard and also add a layer of sphagnum peat, cocofiber, composted bar or similar material. The best soil for tulips is sandy; sandy soil needs some granular fertilizer or organic matter. Tulip planted more deeply ( about two spades deep or about 16 inches) last longer and are less likely to eaten by rodents.
4. Tulip Troubles: in addition to planting the tulips more deeply to ward off rodents, you can use chicken wire across the top, put holly leaves in the holes or use some foot powder in the soil. Tulips can get fungus called Tulip Fire or Botrytis which is evidenced by small yellow spots on the leaves and withered stems. This fungus can be treated with a fungicide.
5. Multiplying Tulips: Enlarging a stock of tulips is easy if you use the offsets which are produced every year. Smaller ones can be planted 3 inches deep and left in place until they flower about two to four years later.
6. Tulips in 'Containers: Tulips need three inches of compost beneath them and at least four inches of compost on top. Please have some drainage holes in the bottom and provide 1/2 inch of drainage material ( small stones or even soda cans work well). Once planted keep the container in a cool dark place until spring. The compost should be a bit moist but NOT soggy! You can move the container to the desired spot in early spring ( late winter for species tulips).

### **Floral Design Points:**

When selecting tulips for floral arrangements please prioritize selecting flowers with firm, closed buds and vibrant, unblemished leaves. The tulips will continue to grow and bend toward the light after cutting so tall and supportive vases/containers which are at least half the height of the tulip stems will help to manage their stem movement. Cut stems at a 45 degree angle to enhance water absorption. Keep the water levels cool and low to prevent rot. Tulips prefer water rather than oasis. Remove leaves below the water level to prevent bacterial growth.

Tulips can be used alone in a mono-botanical arrangement or with other types of foliage/ flowering plant material. Ranunculus or anemone flowers pair well with tulips as does eucalyptus as these materials provide a nice textural contrast.

Please keep your arrangement away from direct sunlight, heat sources and ripening fruit to prolong their life. Tulips can last about three to seven days in water.