

## It's Tulipmania

*By Greg Works, Horticulturalist*

More than 20,000 tulips decorate the grounds at Stan Hywet. Tulips are highly admired for their beauty and are a crown jewel of spring. In addition to their beauty, however, they have a legendary history. Did a tulip bulb really sell for the price of a mansion? Did tulips collapse the Dutch economy? *What was Tulipmania?*



The first wild tulips were found in Central Asia, with a natural range that reaches as far north as Crimea in Ukraine, south to Turkey and Iran, and west to Kazakhstan. Cultivation probably originated in Persia in the 10<sup>th</sup> century. Tulips didn't arrive in the Netherlands until the final days of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Yet, the Dutch are renowned for their tulips, and for the craze, known as Tulipmania, that surrounded them between 1634 and 1637.

Some historians downplay this madness. While it is true that the most expensive bulbs sold for the price of a nice house, the majority of bulbs were far cheaper. Fears of oversupply and price instability caused the tulip market to collapse, but the Dutch economy as a whole was unaffected. Today, the Netherlands are the largest producer of tulips, and are home to famous gardens such as Keukenhof, in Lisse. Known at the Garden of Europe, it features approximately 7 million flower bulbs are planted annually.





Broken tulips – those with breaks in their color – were the most valued tulips in the Netherlands. These unique color patterns were actually caused by a virus, known as a tulip breaking virus, spread by green peach aphids. Truly broken tulips don't exist anymore, as color patterns now result from breeding.

So, while its legends may have been a little exaggerated, *Tulipmania* was a real thing, and its legacy lives on as the tulip continues to fascinate. As you stroll the grounds at Stan Hywet, you too may become mesmerized by the tulips.

