

TRANSCENDENT TULIPS

> It's now been nine months — the duration of a typical human pregnancy — since the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted life as we know it. That seemingly endless stretch of time doesn't even cover how long flower farmers, first in the Netherlands and then stateside, have been carefully monitoring and nurturing the tulips that will brighten homes and lift moods this coming winter.



'CROWN OF DYNASTY'
Sun Valley Farms



'JUMBO PINK'
Len Busch Roses



'DYNASTY'
Washington Bulb



'COLUMBUS'
Washington Bulb



'SILVER PARROT'
Oregon Flowers



'LASER GAME'
Oregon Flowers

Fresh Choices

In early spring, Dutch growers run cutting machines through their fields, lopping off flower heads to reinvigorate the still-living bulbs, which are sold to growers such as Tyler Meskers, vice president and operations manager of Oregon Flowers. "It's a sad sight to watch, but also satisfying, because we know it results in hardier flowers," Meskers said. In addition to transferring energy underground, this practice helps farmers detect viruses and pests, so they can remove infected specimens. Following the late spring/summer dormancy, the bulbs are dug up, washed and graded, have their skins removed, undergo various treatments, are packaged by size and variety, and then loaded onto a container ship bound for Montreal. From there, they travel by train, plane and/or truck to reach individual farms.



'MASCOTTE'
Sun Valley Farms



'ROCOCCO'
Sun Valley Farms



'LAPTOP'
Oregon Flowers



'SUPER PARROT'
Sun Valley Farms



'TIMELESS'
Washington Bulb



'KUNG FU'
Oregon Flowers



'MONSELLA'
Sun Valley Farms

'IRENE PARROT'
Sun Valley Farms

Oregon Flowers received its early season tulip bulbs (available to florists in January and February) around Halloween. “We plant them and give them the right temperature treatment (45 to 49 F), which tells the bulbs to produce roots,” Meskers said. Once roots develop, they’re transferred to the greenhouse, kept at 62 degrees, which triggers the bulbs to produce flowers. “We’re essentially trying to mimic the Dutch season inside our cooler and greenhouse,” he explained. “It’s pretty amazing how well they respond to temperature manipulation, but there has been a lot of trial and error over the past 400 years to figure this out.” That said, he added that “Although you *can* force a tulip to open earlier than it wants to, it won’t be happy, and it won’t perform well.” For top quality, ask your supplier what’s in season.

Here are just a few of the varieties that will be at their peak in early 2021. 🌷

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'DENMARK'
Oregon Flowers



'ORANGE WESTFRISIAN'
Oregon Flowers



'ORANGE JUICE'
Len Busch Roses



'WORLD FAVORITE'
Oregon Flowers