

# Dutch treat: Philadelphia Flower Show celebrates Holland

March 5 2017, by Kristen De Groot

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In this Wednesday, March 1, 2017, photo, hollyhocks bloom in a greenhouse where plants for the Philadelphia Flower Show are growing, at Meadowbrook Farm in Jenkintown, Pa. The Philadelphia Flower Show is teaming up with experts from the Netherlands to celebrate the beauty and ingenuity of Dutch culture. The theme of this year's floral festival is "Holland: Flowering the World" and it runs March 11 through March 19. Last year, the show attracted about 255,000 people. (AP Photo/Jacqueline Larma)

Visitors arriving at the Philadelphia Flower Show this year will feel as if

they're stepping into the endless flower fields of Holland.

A rainbow sea of 30,000 tulips and other blooms will stretch seemingly into the horizon as a canopy of 6,000 cut and dried flowers floats overhead. Bridges covered in Delft tiles, illuminated windmills and splashing canals will welcome them through the undulating gardens.

The festival runs March 11 through March 19 and is billed as the largest events of its kind in the U.S. The show attracted about 255,000 people last year.

The Pennsylvania Horticultural Society's show this year, "Holland: Flowering the World," celebrates the beauty of the Dutch landscape and the ingenuity of the country's green technologies.

But what's hidden among the swaths of tulips, daffodils and hyacinths is the backstory of the blooms, which started their journey to the flower show last summer at a quaint farm and garden center nestled in the rolling hills just outside the city.

Meadowbrook Farm, in suburban Jenkintown, is operated by the horticultural society and supplies flowers and plants for many of the show's 50 major exhibitors.

Customers contact the farm each summer with ideas for their show displays and their plant wish-lists. Then workers go about raising the plants and "forcing" the flowers.



In this Wednesday, March 1, 2017, photo, grower Regina McKee works with tulips in a greenhouse growing plants for the Philadelphia Flower Show at Meadowbrook Farm, in Jenkintown, Pa. The Philadelphia Flower Show is teaming up with experts from the Netherlands to celebrate the beauty and ingenuity of Dutch culture. The theme of this year's floral festival is "Holland: Flowering the World" and it runs March 11 through March 19. Last year, the show attracted about 255,000 people. (AP Photo/Jacqueline Larma)

Plants need a certain amount of exposure to cold temperatures to flower, but also enough days of warmth and the proper amount of light, and those amounts vary from plant to plant.

So plants are put in a 37-degree cooler to make them feel like it's winter, then transferred to the 68-degree greenhouse, deluded into thinking it's spring and time to shine.

"It's an art and a science," said Nathan Roehrich, the garden's head grower. "There are so many variables. It's all about knowing your plants."

On a recent afternoon, the farm had more of a feeling of a triage unit than a garden center.

Workers hustled pallets of flowers from the greenhouses to a cooler, as the unseasonably warm February day brought the risk of too much flowering ahead of the show. Going back in the cooler puts that process on hold.



In this Wednesday, March 1, 2017, photo, catmint "Junior Walker" grows behind a bleeding heart plant in a greenhouse growing plants for the Philadelphia Flower Show, at Meadowbrook Farm in Jenkintown, Pa. The Philadelphia Flower Show is teaming up with experts from the Netherlands to celebrate the beauty and ingenuity of Dutch culture. The theme of this year's floral festival is "Holland: Flowering the World" and it runs March 11 through March 19. Last year, the show attracted about 255,000 people. (AP Photo/Jacqueline Larma)

The farm's 13 greenhouses are equipped with alarms that trip if temperatures dip dramatically, said Jenny Rose Carey, the farm's senior director, alerting the overnight caretaker to move the plants to a warmer spot.

Tulips, native to Asia, came to the Netherlands in 1593, when botanist Carolus Clusius planted the first bulb in Dutch soil.

During Holland's "Tulip Mania" in the 17th century, the flower became a status symbol and sparked a brief but ruinous bubble that saw tulip bulbs sell for as much as the price of a house before the market crashed.

Tulips remain a fixture of the Dutch countryside and are the star of the Philadelphia show.

Floral and landscape exhibits in the 10-acre hall focus on various aspects of Dutch life: One is an ode to Amsterdam's Red Light District; another highlights the city's innovative bike share program that has spread to cities throughout the world, including Philadelphia.





In this Wednesday, March 1, 2017, photo, cornflowers bloom in a greenhouse growing plants for the Philadelphia Flower Show, at Meadowbrook Farm in Jenkintown, Pa. The Philadelphia Flower Show is teaming up with experts from the Netherlands to celebrate the beauty and ingenuity of Dutch culture. The theme of this year's floral festival is "Holland: Flowering the World" and it runs March 11 through March 19. Last year, the show attracted about 255,000 people. (AP Photo/Jacqueline Larma)

In addition to floral beauty, the show explores Dutch innovation in [green technologies](#), starting with the nation's windmills, one of the earliest uses of natural energy.

A main highlight on this theme will be the Ecodome, making its first travels outside the Netherlands. The 70-foot-wide, 30-foot-high geodesic dome designed by landscape architect Nico Wissing showcases sustainability practices in the Netherlands. It features moss water

storage, an insect "hotel," living walls, fruit trees, climbing plants and edible plants.

Other highlights are a Dutch shopping village with regional delights, timed floral arrangement competitions in the spirit of "Iron Chef" and a pop-up beer garden where show-goers can experience a different taste of the Netherlands.

New this year is a spa where weary visitors can refresh with hand, shoulder and foot massages and a make-your-own essential oil and potpourri activity.

The annual event, which dates to 1829, serves as a rite of spring for the region. Proceeds benefit the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society and its programs, including an urban tree planting campaign and City Harvest, which provides locally grown, fresh produce for underserved families.



In this Wednesday, March 1, 2017, photo, a buckeye tree, part of the gold medal exhibit, begins to bloom in a greenhouse growing plants for the Philadelphia Flower Show, at Meadowbrook Farm in Jenkintown, Pa. The Philadelphia Flower Show is teaming up with experts from the Netherlands to celebrate the beauty and ingenuity of Dutch culture. The theme of this year's floral festival is "Holland: Flowering the World" and it runs March 11 through March 19. Last year, the show attracted about 255,000 people. (AP Photo/Jacqueline Larma)



In this Wednesday, March 1, 2017, photo, grower Dee Thurmer cranks down plastic siding to protect plants in a greenhouse that are growing for the Philadelphia Flower Show, at Meadowbrook Farm in Jenkintown, Pa. The Philadelphia Flower Show is teaming up with experts from the Netherlands to celebrate the beauty and ingenuity of Dutch culture. The theme of this year's floral festival is "Holland: Flowering the World" and it runs March 11 through March 19. Last year, the show attracted about 255,000 people. (AP Photo/Jacqueline Larma)



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