



The worship of Flora

Nowhere in Europe was the scientific knowledge of flora and fauna at such a high level as in the Republic of the Seven United Provinces. Men and women studied with great passion everything that grew and blossomed. They created the most beautiful albums, depicting flowers and plants, both native and non-native, in a meticulous and colorful manner.

Garden lovers

They were called 'florilegia', publications with incredibly detailed images in etching or engraving, intended to illustrate the beauty of flowers and plants. They came into being because researchers did not want to learn about flora and fauna from books, but by studying and then depicting them themselves. So they grew and collected, studied and drew extensively. The exhibition shows several famous publications. The book *Rariorum plantarum historia* by **Carolus Clusius** (1526-1609), the physician and botanist who from 1594 led the Hortus Botanicus in Leiden, dates from 1601. In the book he described (and depicted) more than 100 new plant species. Clusius was surrounded by an international network of garden lovers and amateur botanists from the higher circles, including several women. It was therefore no coincidence that the painted flower still life 'suddenly' emerged as a genre from 1600 onwards.

Tulipomania

The tulip, nowadays seen as 'typically' Dutch, did not come from these regions at all, but via Turkey from Asia, among other places. In the 17th century, this flower quickly became extremely popular and was therefore depicted in countless beautiful tulip books. Judith Leyster's (1609-1660) tulip album in the Frans Hals Museum shows a very refined drawing of a tulip called The Early Brabant Sun. Together with (possibly) her uncle Jan, **Maria Moninckx** (1676-1757) was the namesake of the so-called Moninckx atlas of the Amsterdam Hortus Botanicus. The 425 watercolour drawings of exotic plants that grew there from 1686 onwards are brought together in nine volumes, three of which are on display in the present exhibition. The Early Brabantsson was one of the tulips that fetched as much as a canal house in Amsterdam during Tulipomania in 1637. A spectacular windfall trade was followed by an equally dramatic collapse in prices, leaving countless tulip investors ruined.

Versailles

All these flowers and plants came from gardens, greenhouses and orangeries of country houses that were famous all over Europe in the 17th century. Zorgvliet, Lockhorst, Huis Honselaarsdijk, Vijverhof and Gunsterstein were household names among botanists and plant collectors because of their extensive gardens. The English author and scientist John Evelyn wrote in 1686: '(...) they [the Dutch] are so universally disposed towards gardens there (...) that their veneration of Flora, and the

parterre [flower bed] is extraordinary'. The French, wrote Evelyn, had very large gardens at Versailles but 'yet nowhere are gardens maintained so neatly and precisely [as in Holland]'.
[View on Amazon](#)

In Full Bloom

10 February - 6 June