

Echoes of Paradise: the Garden and Flora in Islamic Art | The Role of Individual Plants and Flowers

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Another popular flower, particularly in Ottoman Turkey, was the tulip. Known as lale among the Turks and Persians alike, this versatile elegant flower was cultivated with great passion in Ottoman times. In the 18th century, under Sultan Ahmed III the love of tulips became frenzied: extortionately expensive festivals were organised which nearly bankrupted the Ottoman Empire. Its beauty was also celebrated in religious poetry. Here, the tulip symbolised a martyr for the faith and the mystical, self-denying lover.



Name:
Embroidered linen

Dynasty:
Hegira 11th century / AD 17th century Ottoman

Details:
Burrell Collection, Glasgow Museums
Glasgow, Scotland, United Kingdom

Justification:
The red tulips on this wall-hanging symbolise fertility and life as well as reflecting the contemporary horticultural fashion for these beautiful flowers.



Name:
Kaftan fragment

Dynasty:
Around hegira 1008 / AD 1600 Ottoman

Details:
National Museums of Scotland (NMS)
Edinburgh, Scotland, United Kingdom

Justification:
This kaftan fragment is covered all over with sinuous tulip scrolls.



Name:
Cylindrical tankard

Dynasty:
About Hegira 982 / AD 1575 Ottoman

Details:
Calouste Gulbenkian Museum
Lisbon, Portugal

Justification:
On this tankard the slender tulips are painted so naturalistically that they seem to be swaying in a light breeze.
