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SKAGIT VALLEY BLOOMS IN SPRING

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By Catherine Brakke

Photo credit Katie Rozummy



Did you know Washington State's Skagit Valley produces more tulips, daffodils and irises than any other state in the United States?

Washington is known for rain, and in this case, that's not a bad thing. The popular saying "April showers brings May flowers" is accurate for Washington and great for the Skagit Valley, since agriculture is its number one industry.

All year, this region offers beautiful views from its shorelines to mountains. However, from March through May, acres of daffodils, tulips, and irises appear to offer a colorful spring experience. The La Conner Daffodil Festival takes place in March, a cheery prelude to the more popular Skagit Valley Tulip Festival that runs all April. The best time to see the tulips is from about mid-April through May. During that time, thousands of Washingtonians and tourists make the drive to the valley to experience the magic of the Daffodil and Tulip Festivals.

NU student Emile Heisel drove down several weeks ago to see the tulips, and was disappointed to find only a few rows were in bloom.

"But as I left I saw fields of daffodils! I drove over and was so happy! I felt in that moment the Lord reminded me that everything has its season. We aren't to get ahead of where we are placed now, just to take it day by day," said Heisel.

The festival itself is not a specific location, but designed to be a driving tour of the endless gardens. Many visitors will also park and walk through the fields, or bike on the flat, shouldered roads.

"Every year my dad and I go up there with our bikes," said Adam Chidester, a visitor to the Skagit Valley Fields. "We spend hours riding around and checking out the amazing scenery. It's truly amazing and one of my favorite memories. I always look forward to it."

One of the more popular gardens you can either walk through or drive around is the five-acre RoozenGaarde garden. The RoozenGaarde family owns 1,000 acres in which they produce bulbs that are sold all around the world. If you choose to walk this garden there is a \$7.00 admission price and \$6.00 for those with military ID.

"Going up to see the Skagit Valley's fields of flowers is one of my favorite days of spring every year. It's so beautiful!" said local resident Carmen Alvarez. "Every year I am shocked at how many flowers there are and think about the people that make it happen. I try to tell people about it, but I don't think they fully understand how amazing it is. Everyone needs to take a trip to see them for sure."

More information to plan your visit can be found at <http://www.visitskagitvalley.com/> and www.tulipfestival.org.