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**Invitation to Cover**  
**For Immediate Release**

**Garden Honors *Groundbreakers***  
during WPA Garden Heritage Celebration  
*Mae Breckenridge-Haywood, Gianni Graham, Cecelia Tucker*

**What:** WPA Garden Heritage Celebration – FREE admission 9:00 a.m. to noon  
**Where:** Norfolk Botanical Garden, 6700 Azalea Garden Road, Norfolk, VA 23518  
**When:** Saturday, May 21, 2016 from 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. (*Rain or Shine*)

NORFOLK, Va., May 20, 2016 – Join Norfolk Botanical Garden (NBG) this Saturday, May 21, 2016 at 11:00 a.m. for the 8<sup>th</sup> annual Works Progress Administration (WPA) Garden Heritage Day Celebration. During this year's celebration the Garden will honor three community **Groundbreakers** - Mae Breckenridge-Haywood, Gianni Graham, and Cecelia Tucker, who are all making remarkable differences in the Hampton Roads community. The inaugural **Groundbreaker** awards are in honor of the WPA statue entitled Breaking Ground, which recognizes the 220 WPA women and men who significantly impacted our community. The award will honor individuals, groups and organizations that exhibit committed and groundbreaking leadership and service.

Norfolk Public Schools Superintendent Dr. Melinda Boone will serve as the keynote speaker. The event will also feature an invocation presented by Father Matthias Lusembo from Christ the King Church, a reading of known WPA worker names, a musical performance by One Love, and an appearance by Barbara Ciara, Managing Editor at WTKR NewsChannel 3 & WGNT Channel 27, who will serve as the Mistress of Ceremonies. In collaboration with the Norfolk Arts, the Garden will also dedicate the newly installed stainless steel **Intertwine** sculpture that incorporates the themes of Norfolk Botanical Garden – seasonal changes, botany, community, planting, history, and the men and women of the WPA. The artists, Mark Grieve and Ilana Spector of California, will be in attendance. Also in attendance are authors Martha Williams and Amy Yarsinske, who are promoting their books – *Norfolk Botanical Garden: WPA Untold Story* and *The Norfolk Botanical Garden, A Natural Treasure*, respectively.

The WPA Garden Heritage Day event began in 2009 with the unveiling of the commemorative sculpture *Breaking Ground* and the dedication of the WPA Memorial Garden. The Memorial honors and celebrates the contributions of the 220 African-American workers whose labor created the Garden.

On June 30, 1938, Representative Norman R. Hamilton announced a Works Progress Administration (WPA) grant project to create Norfolk Botanical Garden. A group of more than 200 African-American women and 20 African-American men were assigned to the project. The workers cleared dense vegetation and planted the first azaleas around what is now called Mirror Lake. In just one year, thousands of azaleas, rhododendrons, shrubs and trees were planted. Laborers were paid twenty-five cents an hour.

The Garden, which encompasses 175 beautiful acres, is presently an oasis of more than 50 themed gardens, including *WOW- World of Wonders: A Children's Adventure Garden*, and is the only WPA garden in existence today. It is a diverse garden with stunning plant collections that can be explored by tram, boat, or walking tours. Join the celebration that honors the dedication of the WPA workers and the accomplishments of the Garden over the past 78 years!

### **About Norfolk Botanical Garden**

The Garden is accredited by the American Alliance of Museums and is recognized as a Virginia Historic Landmark. A Virginia Green attraction, the Garden is also listed on the National Register of Historic Places and is managed by the Norfolk Botanical Garden Society supported by the City of Norfolk. Norfolk Botanical Garden is dedicated to enriching life by promoting the enjoyment of plants and the environment through beautiful gardens and education programs. Admission is \$12 for adults, \$10 for seniors and military, \$10 for ages 3-17, children 2 and under are free. For more information, visit [www.norfolkbotanicalgarden.org](http://www.norfolkbotanicalgarden.org).

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200 African-American women and 20 African-American men planted the first plants in the Garden and left a remarkable legacy for all of Hampton Roads and the nation. By 1941, the Garden displayed nearly five thousand azaleas, and seventy-five landscaped acres that were encompassed by five miles of walking trails.



Left Photo: (taken by Donna Krabill at the 2013 WPA Garden Heritage Celebration Ceremony)

Mary Elizabeth Ferguson is the only known WPA worker living today. She is quite the celebrity in the community and to all of the NBG family. We honor her and all of the African-American men and women who first cleared the land and planted the first plantings 78 years ago.