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For Immediate Release

WPA Garden Heritage Celebration

FREE admission 9am-noon

NORFOLK, VA— Join Norfolk Botanical Garden (NBG) for the 8th annual Works Progress Administration (WPA) Garden Heritage Day Celebration on Saturday, May 21, 2016 from 11:00 a.m. to noon. This year's celebration features Norfolk Public Schools Superintendent Dr. Melinda Boone as the keynote speaker, as well as an invocation presented by Father Matthias Lusembo from Christ the King Church. The event will also feature a reading of known WPA worker names, a musical performance, and an appearance by Barbara Ciara, Managing Editor at WTKR NewsChannel 3 & WGNT Channel 27, who will serve as the Mistress of Ceremonies. The Garden will also dedicate the newly installed stainless steel *Intertwine* sculpture that incorporates many themes of Norfolk Botanical Garden – the seasons, botany, community, planting, history, and the men and women of the WPA. Guests will enjoy complimentary admission between 9:00 a.m. to noon.

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 is presently an oasis of more than 50 themed gardens, including *WOW- World of Wonders: A Children's Adventure Garden*, which encompasses 175 beautiful acres 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.

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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.