



Media Contact:
Kelly Welsh
Marketing & Communications
Director
kelly.welsh@nbgs.org
Office: 757)441-5830 ext. 346

For Immediate Release

Norfolk Mayor Kenneth Alexander to Deliver Keynote Address *FREE admission 9am-noon*

NORFOLK, VA, March 31, 2017 – Join Norfolk Botanical Garden (NBG) for the 9th annual Works Progress Administration (WPA) Garden Heritage Day Celebration on Saturday, April 8, 2017 from 11:00 a.m. to noon. This year's celebration features Norfolk Mayor Kenneth Alexander as the keynote speaker. The event will also feature a reading of known WPA worker names, and an appearance by WVEC on-air talent Ashley Smith, who will serve as Mistress of Ceremonies. The Garden will offer complimentary admission between 9:00 a.m. - 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 25 cents an hour.

Norfolk Botanical Garden represents an oasis of 53 themed gardens encompassing 175 beautiful acres. From stunning plant collections to *WOW- World of Wonders: A Children's Adventure Garden*, this diverse landscape 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 79 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:
(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 79 years ago.