From the President

Never did I think I’d be composing my summer letter to you at home, with the entire globe in lock down, a pandemic of epic proportions raging. Never did I think I’d see an entire continent on fire, with an estimated billion creatures dead. Never did I think I would see a plague of locusts, literally of biblical proportions, devastating another continent’s food supply—the result of record cyclones, rains and flooding. Never. I certainly never imagined I’d see all of this in one year. I could go on about climate change and environmental destruction, about how completely unbalanced we have made the natural world. I won’t because I think you already know that and I think you’re ready to help fix it. We who are drawn to gardens and nature understand the balance, understand the connection all living things have. By visiting and supporting NBG you are helping us to bring that connection to those whom we must enlist in our work of regeneration and re-bridging our connection to the natural world.

Speaking of connection, I hope you were able to see our winter into spring exhibit, Nature Connects® Art with LEGO® Bricks. Inspiring, educational and just plain fun, it was a great way to translate a beloved toy into a teaching tool and work of art. Speaking of art, we are so proud to have the great honor of being featured on a United States postage stamp! See story on page 2.

This summer’s exhibit will “flamaze you” with their beauty and charm—a flock of 70 topiary flamingos on loan from our friends at the Franklin Park Conservatory and Botanical Gardens in Columbus, OH. Look for them flocking on campus starting in June.

Summer will find us all growing food to help feed ourselves and our community. A modern day Victory Garden movement is underway to encourage all of us to grow some of our own food. I challenge each of you to try some edibles in your yard, in a container, in your perennial border or anywhere the sun shines at your place. You’ll be helping to reduce climate pollution, you’ll save money, and if you grow a little extra, you’ll help feed a neighbor, friend or stranger.

Lastly I’d like to say how grateful I am that we have been able to stay open during this time of COVID-19. Nationally only 3% of all public gardens were allowed to remain open; we were one of only 8. Our staff has performed admirably and our guests and members have been so supportive and appreciative of our efforts at remaining open and welcoming, a respite from the chaos. Our plan going forward is to re-open all our buildings June 12. Classes will resume while maintaining social distancing guidelines and limited group sizes. We ask that when we do reopen our buildings that visitors wear masks indoors: they will be required. While not required outdoors, we highly recommend their use while visiting us. Please remember to stay a minimum of 6 feet away from others, including our hard-working staff. Feel free to get off the regular trail and hit the grass! All of our grassy areas (unless signs say otherwise) are OK to walk on, as are our mulched paths. With over 175 acres and 16 plus miles of paved and unpaved paths (not to mention lots of grassy areas) there’s plenty of room to spread out.

Thank you, thank you, thank you for all the emails and notes of thanks during this time. We are deeply appreciative of them and your support gives us renewed passion to continue our work of connecting people to nature through the world of plants. Stay safe, be well and plant a better world.

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Pineapple guava (*Acca sellowiana*) sounds like something very exotic and tropical, which being from South America, it is. However, it’s very hardy here in Coastal Virginia. This plant is an evergreen shrub that typically only reaches 6-8’ tall and wide, though in other climates it may grow larger. The beautifully unusual flowers open in June, and are followed later in the summer by delicious fruit, which falls off the shrub when it is ripe. No guess work involved! You can see these (and taste them!) for yourself near the restrooms between the café and the Administration building.

Can you imagine what a July in Coastal Virginia would look like without the blooms of our iconic crapemyrtles (*Lagerstroemia* species and hybrids)? They are so prolific that one might think they are native. Rather, they originated on the other side of the globe in China, the Himalayas, Indochina, and Australia, but they are right at home here in our climate. Of course July is not the only month to appreciate them. They have colorful fall foliage, and their handsome bark and structure can really be appreciated in winter. Crapemyrtles can be seen all over the Garden, but our best collection is in the Flowering Arboretum.

Butterfly ginger (*Hedychium coronarium*) is another plant from far away that has found a welcome home in local gardens. This herbaceous perennial has large, dramatic, upright stems that will add a touch of the tropics to the landscape. In late summer, they are topped with beautiful white flowers that emit a head-turning sweet aroma. Give this perennial plenty of room as it gets 6’ tall and can spread wider. It likes full-to-partial sun in moist soil. The best places to see them at the Garden are the Sensory Garden and Baker Perennial Garden.
Norfolk Botanical Garden featured on U.S. Postage Stamp!

Norfolk Botanical Garden (NBG) is featured on a United States Postal Service Forever stamp! Our stamp, as part of the upcoming “American Gardens” series, is available for purchase. The American Gardens collection captures the essence and the beauty of nature. Our stamp is a photograph of our Bicentennial Rose Garden, one of the largest rose gardens on the east coast. This beloved garden peaks in early May just in time for Mother’s Day and continues blooming throughout the summer and fall. Celebrating American gardens, NBG is among 10 nationwide gardens photographed by Allen Rokach between 1996 and 2014. Gardening has been an essential activity to our nation since its earliest years. Whether you are gardening for food, environmental sustainability, or for the beautiful aesthetics of blooming flowers, gardening in a variety of different ways connects us all to nature.

“If you think it’s easy getting on a US Postage stamp, just ask someone who’s on one! I’m kidding, of course,” said Michael Desplaines, NBG President & CEO.

“The honor of being on a United States Postage Stamp is reserved for distinguished Americans who have left us or for notable American Institutions,” he said.

“Today I’m proud that Norfolk Botanical Garden is being recognized as one of those notable American institutions. We’re so pleased to be a part of this historic moment when Gardens around the nation are being honored in such a prestigious way. Thank you USPS and thank you America for your love affair with Gardens.”

Now more than ever gardens are needed as a therapeutic refuge and necessity for food production. The timing is perfect to remind communities to connect with the outdoors.

Share your love of gardens—especially Norfolk Botanical Garden! Purchase the American Gardens Forever stamps, featuring Norfolk Botanical Garden stamps at the USPS Postal Store (www.usps.com) or your local post office.

Art Director Ethel Kessler designed the “American Gardens” series with photos taken by Allen Rokach between 1996 and 2014.

“We’re so pleased to be a part of this historic moment when gardens around the nation are being honored in such a prestigious way. Thank you USPS and thank you America for your love affair with gardens.”

— Michael P. Desplaines, NBG President & CEO
Volunteers at NBG are not only at the heart of our operation, they are also at the heart of the community. During this difficult time, when they find themselves unable to help the Garden directly, our volunteers have decided to help others around them. Masks are in short supply these days, so several of our volunteers have answered the call to help supply protective masks for the medical community and for each other. Several have contributed to the mask drive at 757 Maker Space, which to date has distributed over 5,000 masks.

NBG is a popular place for active and retired medical professionals to volunteer. Many who retire often keep up their certifications and licenses in case they are needed. At a time like this, one of our volunteers who is a retired nurse is now serving with the VB Medical Reserve Corps by answering the COVID-19 hotline and doing case investigation for COVID-19 positive patients. Other volunteers are doing what they can for the medical community, like manning the parking lines at testing centers.

While NBG is a great place for volunteers to come and learn about horticulture and gardening, some volunteers come in with a wealth of knowledge and are looking to share what they know. If you’ve been following the NBG Volunteers Facebook page, you already know about the series on how to get your garden ready for summer. Much of the information comes from our Potager Kitchen Garden volunteer, Lynn Francois. Volunteers in the Potager Kitchen Garden love to get guests excited about vegetable gardening, so it was an easy transition to sharing their enthusiasm online!

The Annual Volunteer Appreciation Dinner was well attended by our beloved volunteers and many NBG staff members. The dinner is held every February in Rose Garden Hall.

Volunteers Sharon McQueen (left) and Richard Wambold (right) join NBG Volunteer Coordinator Phong Luu for fun in the photobooth.
Symposium Recap

Engaging, eye-opening, thought-provoking and overwhelming! These are the words attendees of our 2020 climate change symposium used to describe the program. This feedback confirmed that our speakers delivered the type of impactful information needed for a better understanding of climate change and to spur the need to take urgent action.

Speakers from the academic community, Dr. Michael Allen and Dr. Jeremy Hoffman, provided a clear scientific basis for the changes we are seeing locally and globally. Dr. Hoffman’s ground-breaking research correlating the urban heat island effect with the incidents of heat-related emergency calls in under-served neighborhoods made an impression on the audience.

Ross Weaver from Wetland’s Watch introduced the role of wetlands in mitigating the effects of sea-level rise and chronic flooding issues that plague nearly every low-lying area in Coastal Virginia. With flooding a hot topic in the 757, storm water engineers from the cities of Norfolk and Virginia Beach presented their respective city’s action plans to mitigate rising sea-level and chronic flooding.

Having all these local experts from varied environmental specialties together in one place provided a much needed opportunity for attendees to learn how all the causes, risks and consequences associated with climate change are interconnected.

The time for urgent action:

While climate change is a crisis that brings overwhelming feelings, we still have the collective power to influence its trajectory. Several symposium speakers referenced the New York Times bestselling book edited by Paul Hawken: *Drawdown: the most comprehensive plan ever proposed to reverse global warming* as one of the best resources for realistic solutions that impact the progression of global warming which is at the core of climate change. One hundred solutions to lower greenhouse gas emissions such as carbon dioxide (CO2) are presented in the book by order of impact. The solutions center around three things: replacing fossil fuels, reducing our consumption of energy, and bio-sequestering carbon through photosynthesis. Here are a few doable lifestyle changes that fall within the top tier:

**Alternative energy:**
Fossil fuels are at the core of the climate crisis. Around 40% of CO2 pollution in the United States is linked to power plants burning fossil fuels. Clean energy sources like wind, solar, hydropower and geothermal are more sustainable. Investing in these alternative energy options will significantly reduce carbon pollution.

**Reducing food waste:**
One-third of all food produced is never eaten. That equates to over 1.5 billion tons of wasted food. The reason for the waste ranges from health and safety concerns to rejecting food because it doesn’t look perfect. Be mindful when you shop. Have a plan to use what you buy before it expires. In the United States, only 38% of food waste is composted. Create a backyard composting area to recycle any uncooked vegetable waste back into organic material.

**Plant-rich diet:**
The modern western diet is meat-centric which is hard on our climate as well as our health. The methane and nitrous oxide gases produced from livestock and their by-products are far more destructive greenhouse gases than carbon dioxide. Consider reducing the amount of meat you consume and incorporate more plant-based dishes. Doing so will reduce the amount of carbon dioxide emitted by nearly 8 gigatons. An easy way to get started is to join the “Meatless Mondays” movement.
Prepared for a Swarm, or two!
We’re happy to announce NBG honey bee hives are expanding! What began with two hives last year has grown to four with hopes for a total of six hives by the end of the summer. A few months in advance, NBG Horticulturist Stephen Biela ordered the supplies and built the new hives. When the time was right, we were prepared for the swarm of bees that left their former hive en masse with a newly fertilized queen.

Glyphosate Reduction Program Update
It’s pretty clear to anyone who reads the news that there is controversy about America’s “favorite” overused herbicide, glyphosate (Roundup). Here at NBG we have been looking for ways to reduce our use of the product. Last summer and fall, we began a study to compare glyphosate to several more environmentally friendly herbicides. Based on our findings, we have decided to include two additional products in our weed-killing tool kit. One herbicide’s active ingredient is glufosinate-ammonium, which is derived from a type of soil bacteria (*Streptomyces*). The other product’s active ingredient is pelargonic acid, a chemical substance that occurs naturally in plants and animals. Using these two products, we hope to substantially reduce our use of glyphosate in the Garden. Learn more at NBGgreen.org.

Community Connections
When the weather was too cold to go outside, we brought nature inside! This past winter, we enjoyed connecting with the community at school workshops and expos. We are looking forward to reconnecting with our friends at schools, garden clubs and other groups soon!
“A garden is a thing of beauty and a job forever”

— Anonymous

I’m not sure who Anonymous is, but she or he probably worked or volunteered at Norfolk Botanical Garden at some point! The work of tending a garden is never ending, but thankfully the work of renovating three large pieces of our 1950s infrastructure will soon be coming to an end.

Planted over 82 years ago, Norfolk Botanical Garden underwent a massive building scheme in the late 1950s which transformed the then Azalea Garden into a true botanical garden. The iconic structures from this time period—the Administration Building, NATO Tower and the Hill of Nations (as it was called) and the canal system and its bridges, specifically Cobblestone Bridge—are now over 60 years old. While the Garden continued to grow, building the new Baker Hall Visitor Center in the late 1990s and the World of Wonders Children’s Garden (WOW) in the early 2000s, little was done to the Garden’s original 1950s structures. Our Board of Directors and staff realized we needed to make a substantial investment in these iconic structures or we would lose them forever.

Working with our partner and host city, Norfolk, NBG utilized $2 million of its rainy day fund money and was matched 2-to-1 by the City of Norfolk to create a $6 million dollar fund to repair and preserve these historic structures. We initially completed the award-winning renovation of the iconic, mid-century masterpiece, the Administration Building and then moved on to the complex, technical and aesthetic issue of NATO Tower and its supporting hill.

Currently, we are in the third and final of these three critical renovations: the replacement of Cobblestone Bridge (which is past its useful life cycle) with a structure that is wider, safer and stronger.

To all who contributed to these projects, we thank you. Architects, engineers, builders and especially our volunteer committees of experts, thank you. Thank you also to you: our members and friends who understand the need and importance of historic preservation and who were so patient with us while we took the time needed to investigate the best treatment for these beloved structures.
Join the Revival This Summer

The Garden’s Potager Kitchen Garden will become a Victory Garden. Victory Gardens date back to the 1940s and became essential during World War II. In war time, Victory Gardens were not only used to replenish the food supply, but also served as a time for families to work together and boost morale. This year marks the 75th anniversary of the end of WWII and as we continue to fight the wars of climate change and COVID-19, it’s fitting for all of us to have a Victory Garden.

Look for growing vegetables all summer long throughout the Garden, and interpretative signage to inspire and help you create your own Victory Garden at home.

WOW Children’s Garden

There’s so much to explore in the WOW Children’s Garden! See plants from around the world in our Passport Gardens, travel the habitats of the United States in the Plant Safari, and learn how your food grows on Discovery Peak. Learn ways you can grow plants at home and enjoy nature in your own backyard or around your neighborhood.

GROW Course Catalog & Events Update

Our most beloved events such as the Butterfly and Honey Bee Festivals have been canceled this year due to the COVID-19 pandemic. To find out about updated activities and courses available, check out our GROW Course Calendar & Catalog published digitally on the NBG website. Thank you for your patience as we develop alternative ways for you to engage with the Garden. Look for new videos we’ve created on a variety of topics and some virtual tours of our favorite areas, posted on the NBG website, YouTube channel, and shared on our very popular social media accounts. Thanks for following!
Garden wins 2019 Award for Outstanding Nonprofit in Fundraising

The Hampton Roads Chapter of the Association of Fundraising Professionals (AFP-HR) hosts National Philanthropy Day® in November each year. During a luncheon on that celebrated day, the chapter presents seven awards to local individuals, businesses, organizations, and volunteers who have made a profound impact through philanthropy on the Hampton Roads community.

Last November, NBG was honored to receive the 2019 Award for Outstanding Nonprofit in Fundraising. This award is given to a local nonprofit with demonstrated success in fundraising and a deep commitment to ethical philanthropy and the community it serves. NBG was nominated for this award due to some dramatic changes that have occurred over the past six years: annual visitation has increased from 275,000 to over 420,000; our family membership rate is one of the highest in Hampton Roads; gross revenue has increased by 57%; and total community donations to NBG has skyrocketed by over 300%. We are pleased and humbled by the recognition bestowed by AFP-HR and the support from the community that made it possible.

Butterfly House to Remain Closed

Currently, the Butterfly House will not open this summer due to the continuing crowd restrictions from COVID-19. The house is a crowd pleaser and attracts thousands of visitors a season—all in close proximity. You can still experience butterflies in their natural habitat all over the Garden, especially next to the Butterfly House in the Butterfly Garden. Look for educational programming that includes butterflies and other pollinators in the near future. Though many events have been canceled and programming changed, please visit our website at NBGTogether.org for the most up-to-date information.
In Loving Memory of Helen “Bee” McLeod, December 21, 2019

Bee was a longtime member, volunteer and donor here at the Garden. She served as a member of our Board of Directors for nine years, from 2010—2019. She chaired the Search Committee for our current CEO in 2014 and most recently served as the Board’s Secretary from 2016 —2019.

Bee earned a BBA and an MBA (with honors), both from The College of William and Mary, where she was very active as a Trustee of the Foundation. She also served as President of the Road Runners Club of America and Tidewater Striders, and as a board member of the American Association of Running Clubs and the YWCA of South Hampton Roads. She and her husband Goody Tyler were married at the Garden in July of 2005.

Philanthropy was her passion. She and her husband gave generously to many causes, notably Norfolk Botanical Garden and The College of W&M—her two favorites. As her and Goody’s legacy continues to benefit these organizations, she is greatly missed by her family, friends and all of us here at NBG. Her memorial bench is located in the Richard & Eleanor Evans Great Lawn in the Bicentennial Rose Garden (shown below).

Leaving a Legacy

Evergreen Society Members

The Evergreen Society recognizes and celebrates an outstanding group of friends who generously support the Garden beyond their lifetimes. If you are interested in learning more about the Evergreen Society, methods for making a planned gift, or alerting the Garden to a gift in your estate plan, please contact us.


Be part of the Garden’s Evergreen Society and help ensure a vibrant future for the Garden.

Tribute Opportunities

The beauty, wonder and serenity of the Garden combine to create a perfect setting to honor a loved one, pay tribute to a friend, or mark a special anniversary or milestone. Select from a number of sites in the Garden to place our teakwood bench, complete with commemorative plaque. Please call Cathy Fitzgerald at 757-441-5830 ext. 319 or email her at cathy.fitzgerald@nbgs.org to make an appointment or discuss all tribute opportunities.
Have a plant question?

ASK US!

email
askaplantquestion@nbgs.org

Let our experienced horticulture team answer any plant questions you may have. Send your question by email to: askaplantquestion@nbgs.org

Words cannot express how much we appreciate your support as we remain open during this time.

As a nonprofit organization, your memberships, admissions and donations to the Garden help us fulfill our mission:

Immerse visitors in a world of beauty,
Lead through environmental action, and
Inspire through education and connection to nature.

NBGtogether.org

Please check our website for hours of operation as they may change during the season.