

norfolk botanical garden

HORTICULTURE HIGHLIGHTS

Horticultural Highlights - February 2023

Camellias – Hofheimer Camellia Garden

These old Southern favorites are actually native to China, Japan, and Korea. Camellias (*Camellia japonica* and hybrids) are prized for their large showy, winter and spring-blooming flowers. Although they are planted throughout NBG, the best place to see them is in the Hofheimer Camellia Garden. NBG has an internationally recognized camellia collection with over 1000 different varieties and nearly 2000 individual plants.

Early Daffodils – Garden-wide

Isn't it too early for daffodils? Not at all. With the right selection you can have them blooming from January through April. However, our peak season is usually in March when we will be celebrating Daffodil Daze with a series of Garden Walk and Talks, and daffodil themed classes.

Hybrid Hellebores – The Winter Garden

Within the past few decades plant breeders have been busy with different *Helleborus* species, crossing them back and forth, looking for something new and different. In our Winter Garden you can see some of the results of this effort with varieties that are reliably evergreen, sterile (will not seed around), bloom earlier, and with upright flowers on sturdy stems you can actually see without having to get down on your knees. Look for 'Cinnamon Snow', 'Mahogany Snow', and 'Joseph Lempler', all of which will be blooming this month.

Bearsfoot Hellebore – Border Garden, Infinity Garden

This plant (*Helleborus foetidus*) also goes by the name of dungwort, reeking hellebore, stinking hellebore, and in fact, *foetidus* means smelly. However, you have to crush the stems and foliage to get the aroma, otherwise it is perfectly respectable. It has quite an unusual flower with celadon green petals edged in burgundy, and the evergreen foliage is handsome as well.

Edgeworthia – Winter Garden, Statuary Vista

This plant is sometimes referred to as paperbush, but so are other plants, so we stick to with its botanical name of *Edgeworthia* to avoid confusion. The silvery buds form in December and open in February to clusters of golden yellow, sweetly fragrant flowers. It is one of our favorite winter blooming shrubs.

Japanese Flowering Apricots – Blocker Terrace, Le Jardin

Native to China and grown extensively in Japan, Japanese apricots (*Prunus mume*) are revered in both countries for their winter blooms, reminders that change is on its way. They come in shades of red, pink, or white, but as colorful as they are, your nose may notice them first. They are delightfully fragrant!

Winter Daphne – The Glade

This plant (*Daphne odora*) has a well deserved reputation for being finicky. Not too wet, not too dry, not too sunny, not too shady, and even when the stars align and a perfect spot is found – they can die for no apparent reason. So why bother? The thickly sweet fragrance is profound, one plant capable of perfuming an entire garden. Pro-tip: once planted, never say its name, just enjoy.

Resurrection Fern – WOW

This fern (*Polypodium polypodioides*) is an epiphyte, which means it lives on another plant, usually oak trees, but it is not a parasite. Its common name comes from the fact that during dry times it survives by going dormant, turning brown and looking dead in the process, but when the rains return it springs forth with lush green growth.

Coral Bark Japanese Maple – Le Jardin

While most Japanese maples are noted for their spring and fall foliage, this one (*Acer palmatum* 'Sango-kaku') is noted for its handsome coral-red stems which become particularly colorful in cold weather. You should see them covered in snow – what a photo op!

Orchids – Tropical Display House

The weather may be cold outside, but it is balmy in our Tropical Display House, and that is just how the plants in there like it, including our exotic orchid collection. At this time of year, they begin their main bloom season, which usually peaks in March. As winter progresses stop by often to see what might be in bloom.

Colorful Conifers – Conifer Garden, Garden-wide

While we have conifers throughout our 175 acres, the best place to see them is in the Conifer Garden. In the winter the foliage of many conifers intensifies in color and you can see rich silvery blues, dusky purples, and golden yellows.

The first azaleas of the season! – The Infinity Garden

Rhododendron simsii 'Vittatum' is an old favorite here at NBG, and it is one of the first to bloom every year in late winter. Head to the Infinity Garden and turn right at the gazebo. A walk on that path will bring you up close to their blooms of fuchsia and white.

Cornelian Cherry – Picnic Area

Although the common name for this plant might lead you to believe it is a cherry, it is actually an Asian dogwood (*Cornus mas* 'Spring Glow'). With its bright yellow blooms, it is one of the earliest of the small flowering trees to show its colors. By the way, that common name comes from the showy red fruit that will form later this summer.

'Townhouse' Crapemyrtle – Matson Garden

Most people associate crapemyrtles with summer, but many of them stand out in the winter landscape with their muscular trunks and handsome bark. One of the best at NBG is the 'Townhouse' crapemyrtle (*Lagerstroemia fauriei* 'Townhouse') in the Matson Garden. It also happens to be the Virginia State Champion. Without its leaves you can really appreciate its dark chocolate colored bark. If we happen to get any snow this winter to really bring out that color, be sure to come back with your camera for an Instagram-worthy moment.

Wildlife Watch – Great blue herons are a year-round fixture at NBG. You will most often see them along the edge of the canals, and along the edge of Lake Whitehurst waiting for a meal to swim by.

Les Parks, Director of Horticulture