

norfolk botanical garden

HORTICULTURE HIGHLIGHTS

Horticultural Highlights – Mid-April 2022

Azaleas – Garden Wide

This iconic shrub is draping the Garden in an array of colors. They should reach their peak bloom about the 3rd week of April. While you are enjoying the colors, please remember to thank the ladies and gentlemen who cleared the wild brush that was here to plant azaleas way back in 1938.

Camellias – Hofheimer Camellia Garden

This has been a very good year for Japanese camellias (*Camellia japonica*), and they are still blooming well into April, but don't wait long. Such beauty does not last forever. 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.

Chinese Snowball Viburnum – The Border Garden

The large pale lime blossoms of this plant (*Viburnum macrocephalum*) will make some think a hydrangea on steroids has bloomed way too early. Their blossoms are so similar, but this old-fashioned favorite is always an early spring bloomer. We have two in The Border Garden that are quite large and always draw attention. They are heavily budded and just a week or two away from full bloom.

Carolina Jessamine – Butterfly Restrooms, WOW

Although the sight of its intensely colored, canary yellow flowers are hard to miss, you will likely smell this delightfully fragrant native vine (*Gelsemium sempervirens*) before you see it – it is so sweet. This vine is evergreen and makes for quick cover. It is also the state flower of South Carolina.

Golden Ragwort – Holly Garden

This wonderful native perennial (*Packera aurea*) is a great solution for gardeners with troubling spots. It will grow in sun or shade, deer and rabbits leave it alone, it is great for beneficial pollinators, and it forms a groundcover so thick that weeds will not come up through it. If that's not enough, its bright yellow daisy-like flowers are quite beautiful. A limited quantity will be available this year at the annual NBG plant sale, April 22-24th.

Flowering Dogwood – Garden-wide

Other states get both a state tree and a state flower. Shortchanged Virginians have to be satisfied that our state tree and state flower are one in the same. To make matters worse it is the state flower for North Carolina and the state tree of Missouri, and flowering dogwood's botanical name (*Cornus florida*) calls to mind the Sunshine State. These have just started to open in parts of the Garden and should be at peak bloom in just a few weeks.

Kwanzan Cherries – Statuary Vista, Flowering Arboretum

This cherry (*Prunus serrulata* 'Kwanzan') is the last of the ornamental cherries to bloom. It differs from 'Yoshino' and the weeping varieties in that its flowers are fully double, and a much darker pink in color. They look more like pink pom-poms.

Japanese Maples – Japanese Garden, The Glade, Rhododendron Garden

Though they are typically associated with beautiful fall color, the spring foliage of Japanese maples (*Acer palmatum*) can be just as colorful, if not more so on some varieties. NBG has over 100 different varieties of this elegant tree.

Lady Banks Rose – Rose Garden, Baker Perennial Garden

Always the first rose to bloom, Lady Banks (*Rosa banksiae*) is unlike any other in that it not only blooms very early, but it is also thornless, quite vigorous, and is never plagued by the same diseases that other roses get. For the plant nerds among us – the world's largest Lady Banks rose has been growing in Tombstone, AZ since 1885 and covers a whopping 8000 square feet!

Mayapple – Mirror Lake, Enchanted Forest

This unusual native perennial (*Podophyllum peltatum*) loves to live in shady places, and will spread slowly to form large lush patches. The foliage is very handsome, as are the flowers hidden underneath. Mayapples rely on eastern box turtles to disperse their seeds, and traveling through the digestive system of the turtle increases the seeds' germination rate substantially, enough so that we would likely not have the plant without the turtle.

Spanish Bluebells – Garden-wide

Most spring flowering bulbs need to have full sun, but Spanish bluebells (*Hyacinthoides hispanica*) light up shadier areas of the garden with pools of sky-blue color (though they are also available in pink or white). This bulb is also an excellent naturalizer.

Rhododendron – Rhododendron Garden

These azalea cousins have a reputation for being difficult to grow in Coastal Virginia. However, if you can provide them with very well drained soil in dappled shade you will be rewarded with great clusters of color and evergreen foliage.

Wildlife Watch – Wild turkeys have been spotted roaming through the Garden in the past few weeks. Hopefully they are a nesting pair and are looking to start a family here.

Les Parks, Director of Horticulture