

norfolk botanical garden

HORTICULTURE HIGHLIGHTS

Horticultural Highlights – Early to Mid-July 2022

Hydrangeas – Kaufman Hydrangea Garden

June to early July is peak bloom here for most Hydrangea species, and our Kaufman Hydrangea Garden has many different varieties. Right now, the big leaf hydrangeas (*Hydrangea macrophylla*) are the showiest and the most colorful, but the beautiful white blooms of the panicle hydrangea (*H. paniculata*) have also started to show themselves.

Common Rose Mallow – Frog Bog (WOW)

This plant (*Hibiscus moscheutos*) is North America's most widely distributed hibiscus, native from Canada to Florida and west to Texas and New Mexico. It has beautiful white (sometimes pink) flowers with crimson eyes that easily bloom in high summer. They like full sun in moist soil, and thrive in wet areas.

Crapemyrtles – Garden-wide

Norfolk Botanical Garden has the only recognized collection of crapemyrtles (*Lagerstroemia* species and hybrids) in North America, and likely the world. Our climate is extremely well adapted to their growth, closely mimicking the climate of their native Asia. They have been an important part of our collection since Fred Huette first encouraged area gardeners to plant them last century. Today they are the official tree of the city of Norfolk, and comprise over half of all street trees on city property. Their peak season of bloom is typically early July, but some varieties begin in June.

Desert Willow – Conifer Garden

Willow in name only, this plant (*Chilopsis linearis*) is actually related to catalpa trees. It is native to the desert southwest where it likes to live in washes where water might be more prevalent. It does well here in Coastal Virginia in full sun, but must have very well drained soil. The specimen in our Conifer Garden, near NATO Bridge is a the largest in the state.

Daylilies – Baker Perennial Garden

Daylilies (*Hemerocallis* species and hybrids) are one of the easiest, most satisfying, and most colorful perennials. Our large collection in the Baker Perennial Garden would not be possible without the support we have received from the Tidewater Daylily Society.

Hops – Grain and Hops Garden

Beer wouldn't be beer without the distinct flavor of hops (*Humulus lupulus*). Our plants are currently fully budded and growing on teepee-like structures. Later they will be harvested and a local brewer will craft a beer from them.

Bonsai Collection – Transition Garden

NBG is somewhat unique that our collection is managed by a group of dedicated and passionate bonsai volunteers. Over the past few years they have been able to substantially grow our collection

and it now includes some amazing pieces, many of which were created from ordinary garden plants growing in our gardens or nursery.

Kitchen Garden

This garden is also a little different than many others here at NBG, in that our volunteers have a greater role in its growth, specifically the Norfolk Master Gardeners. They can usually be found in there several days per week to answer questions, and if you are lucky, maybe offer a taste of the home-grown produce growing there. Right now, the garden is nice and full with summer vegetables.

Fennel – Butterfly Garden

Roman soldiers were especially fond of fennel (*Foeniculum vulgare*) thinking it gave them strength, improved eyesight, had other healing properties, and it was also used as a symbol of victory. It seemed to have followed them all over Europe remaining long after their conquests were only subjects for history books. When Europeans settled North America, fennel was brought with them as well, and in some parts of the continent, fennel has escaped cultivation becoming a potentially invasive species, including here in Coastal Virginia. However, the butterflies love it, and you can see large stands of it in our Butterfly Garden, where our horticulturists keep a close eye on it, lest it march all over the garden.

Sacred Lotus – Japanese Garden

There are few flowers more attractive and eye-catching than that of sacred lotus (*Nelumbo nucifera*). The fragrant blossoms are shades of a delicate pink, surrounding a central pod. This edible and medicinal wetland plant is revered in Asian cultures for its ability to cleanly rise above the muck and mud with such beauty. After they blooms have gone, the attractive seed pods will remain and are prized by flower arrangers. You can enjoy these flowers up close and personal from the stone footbridge in our Japanese Garden.

'Star Landing' Lantana – Butterfly Garden

Most lantana varieties (*Lantana camara*) are considered annuals in Coastal Virginia. However, there are a handful that are reliably hardy perennials for us, with the best-known being 'Miss Huff' which is a favorite here at NBG. Over the past few years we have also grown very fond of a variety called 'Star Landing', which is a little less rangy than 'Miss Huff', and the gardeners and volunteers in our Butterfly Garden have been impressed with how many pollinators it attracts. The color of 'Star Landing' is also different being a very strong orange and yellow with no pink.

Wild Quinine – Pollinator Garden

This native perennial (*Parthenium integrifolium*) is covered in clusters of white flowers right now, and will bloom for about 2 months attracting a who's who of pollinators. It has a deep tap root, making it a good plant for tough areas in full sun with well drained to dry soil. Quinine typically comes from the bark of the cinchona tree and was important in the early 1900's as a treatment for malaria. During World War I the supply of cinchona was disrupted. Since *Parthenium integrifolium* also contains quinine, it was used as a substitute, hence the common name.

Joe-Pye Weed – Pollinator Garden, Baker Perennial Garden, Border Garden, and Elsewhere

These tall robust plants (*Eutrochium* species) are a spectacular summer blooming native perennial. Their large mauve flowerheads are very attractive to butterflies, and later on seed-eating birds will relish the ripe seeds. The plants namesake was purported to be a native American herbal healer who used a variety of plants to treat illness, including Joe-Pye weed.

Clethra/Sweet Pepperbush – WOW, Border Garden

This wonderful native shrub (*Clethra alnifolia*) also goes by the name summersweet, and it is easy to see why. At the beginning of the summer season it comes into bloom with sweetly fragrant, white bottlebrush flowers attracting a plethora of pollinators. Later in the fall, the foliage will turn a beautiful golden yellow.

Wildlife Watch – If you see a handsome brown bird plowing through leaf litter, it is likely a brown thrasher searching for food. This omnivore has one of the largest song repertoires of any native bird.

Les Parks, Director of Horticulture