

# norfolk botanical garden

## HORTICULTURE HIGHLIGHTS

### Horticultural Highlights – Early May 2022

#### Roses – Bicentennial Rose Garden

Get out there, and get out there now! It is a riot of color and fragrance.

#### Satsuki Azaleas – Airport Berm, Garden Wide

This group of azaleas are the last to bloom for the season. Satsuki means fifth month in Japanese, which is appropriate for these azaleas as they always bloom in May. In general, Satsukis are lower, wide spreading, have large single flowers, and can come in unusual color combinations.

#### Kousa Dogwood – Garden Wide

The other dogwood (*Cornus kousa*) is an Asian cousin to our own flowering dogwood and state tree (*Cornus florida*), but with notable differences. Kousa dogwoods get their leaves first, then the flowers appear afterwards, seeming to float atop the branches. They are also somewhat easier to grow than our native, being more resistant to insects and diseases. Like our native, the flowers are beautiful; the fruits are eaten by local wildlife; and in fall their foliage turns handsome colors before dropping to reveal attractive bark.

#### 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 eastern box turtle.

#### 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.

#### 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.

#### Wildflower Meadow

This area of the garden is one of the most picturesque right now, and a great place to picnic!

#### Pomegranate – Japanese Garden, Sensory Garden

Even if pomegranates (*Punica granatum*) never provided deliciously tart fruit, high in anti-oxidants, it would be worth growing for its orangiest of orange flowers. So rich and bright that sun glasses are recommended.

#### Japanese Snowbell – Discovery Grove, Flowering Arboretum

This elegant tree (*Styrax japonica*), is covered in pendulous bell-shaped white flowers that hang from its wide-spreading branches. Where the Flowering Arboretum meets Shady Woods and Discovery Grove are two very impressive specimens, including the Virginia state champion!

#### Red Buckeye – Flowering Arboretum, Enchanted Forest, and other places

The ruby throated hummingbirds are returning from their winter retreats in warmer climates, and they need some food. They are fond of tubular shaped flowers full of nectar, and our native red buckeye (*Aesculus pavia*) provides welcome sustenance.

#### Star Jasmine – Circle Garden

This Southern favorite (*Trachelospermum jasminoides*) is one of the most fragrant vines filling the air with its vanilla-like fragrance. It is evergreen, thrives in heat and humidity, but Coastal Virginia is about as far north as it will tolerate.

#### Mountain Laurel – Mirror Lake

This native plant (*Kalmia latifolia*) is one of North America's loveliest shrubs. The flowers come in shades of pink, white, and red, and their unusual buds and blooms are best appreciated up close. Although they have a reputation for being difficult to grow, where they are happy they are prolific – like Mirror Lake.

#### Bonsai Collection – Transition Garden

Our bonsai collection has recently come out of protective storage for the winter and is now on display in the 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.

Wildlife Watch – The eastern bluebirds are taking advantage of the bluebird houses that are placed around the Garden. We have numerous new chicks enjoying what NBG has to offer.

*Les Parks, Director of Horticulture*