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 this year the cool spring delayed their blooms by several weeks, but they are making up for lost time.

Jeana Phlox – Pollinator Demonstration Garden
It can be difficult to find plants that excel at both garden performance and at providing ecological benefits, but Jeana phlox (Phlox paniculata ‘Jeana’) does so. Gardeners love it for its tall clusters of pink flowers that bloom from July to September on a nearly mildew proof plant. Hosts of butterflies and other pollinators flock to its flowers as well.

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 the 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.

Century Plant – Subtropical Garden
This plant (Agave americana) gets its common name from the mistaken belief that they only bloom every 100 years. Actually, it is more like 10-20 years. However, agaves are monocarpic, meaning that after flowering the plant dies, but usually it will leave behind a “litter of pups” to take its place. They do go out in spectacular fashion producing a flower stalk that can easily reach 10-12’, or more! The best place to see this one is actually from across the canal in our Border Garden or Matson Garden.

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.

Panicle Hydrangeas – Kaufman Hydrangea Garden, Flowering Arboretum, Garden-wide
Although the more familiar bigleaf hydrangeas tend to hold their bloom color well into summer, often ageing gracefully, they are now past their bright peak. However, the panicle hydrangeas (Hydrangea paniculata) came into their own in July, looking good all summer. These differ not only in bloom time, but unlike many other hydrangeas, they do well in full sun. The flowers usually emerge a fresh greenish white, mature to pure white, then age to a dusky pink later in the summer.
Black-eyed Susans – Garden-wide
One of the most prolific genera of North American native plants is *Rudbeckia*, commonly referred to as black or brown-eyed Susan, or coneflower. There are many different species that do well in our climate and summer is their season to shine. Their flowers attract insect pollinators, and their ripe seeds offer many birds sustenance.

*Agastache 'Blue Fortune' – Canal Walk*
This perennial is a hybrid between a Korean species and a North American species, and it has a lot going for it. The blue-green foliage has a fresh minty aroma; it does well in sunny drier locations; deer and rabbits generally leave it alone; its pale lavender blue flowers bloom from late June to September; and most importantly, it is a pollinator magnate, surpassed by few others.

*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.

*Hardy Bananas – Sub-tropical Garden*
While most banana species are tropical and will not survive our winters, they are still used extensively for summer plantings to add an exotic touch to landscapes. However, there are several hardy species that will survive our winters here in Coastal Virginia, going dormant at the first freeze and coming back again once temperatures warm again in spring.

*Rattlesnake Master – Administration Building*
This North American native perennial (*Eryngium yuccifolium*) with the unusual common name is grown for its handsome silvery flowers and foliage. It likes sunny, hot, dry areas with lean soil. Too much water and rich soil will make it flop. That common name refers to its use in indigenous medicine to treat rattlesnake bites. We don’t know how successful those treatments were, so instead we recommend a quick trip to the nearest ER!

*Ornamental Grasses – Garden-wide*
There are many ornamental grasses at NBG with multiple species represented. They are the perfect way to add texture to the landscape, and with a slight breeze they also add movement. Late in the summer many varieties are in full flower.

*Butterfly House*
Our butterfly house opened in late June, and it is full of colorful native butterflies and the plants they need to survive. Our volunteers and interns can answer any question you might have on how to make your own garden more butterfly friendly.

*Bonsai Collection – Transition Garden*
NBG is somewhat unique that our bonsai collection is managed by a group of dedicated and passionate 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 plants growing in our gardens or nursery.

*Wildlife Watch –* With the recent rains, some of the best places to bird watch at NBG are around puddles. A variety of bird species will use them to drink from or to bathe.

*Les Parks, Director of Horticulture*