My sincere thanks for the warm welcome I have received from so many of you over the past couple of months as I began my new position as President & CEO. As the former NBG Chief Financial Officer and VP of Human Resources for the last four years, I have had the honor and privilege of working side by side with our previous President & CEO, Michael P. Desplaines who this summer accepted a position as CEO of The Los Angeles County Arboretum and Botanic Garden. I wanted to take a moment to thank him for his strategic leadership and mentorship to me personally and to this organization for the last nine years. Michael has served the Garden well and he can be assured that the vision of The Garden of Tomorrow for Virginia’s largest botanical garden will come to fruition.

I also want to personally thank Clenise Platt who recently concluded her position as Chair of the Garden’s Board of Directors this summer. Her leadership and insights were invaluable to our organization and we thank her for nine years of service.

My connection to Norfolk Botanical Garden began my first week living in Coastal Virginia. After relocating with my wife, who accepted an amazing opportunity as a clinical psychologist supporting the Navy, we paid a visit to the Garden. With the roses in full bloom and the pinks of the Yoshino cherry trees and azaleas still aglow, we were swept off our feet and immediately became members. Weeks later the opportunity to become the non-profit’s first Chief Financial Officer became available and I knew this was an important opportunity to make a difference in our new community.

A little background on myself – besides being an avid gardener, cook and advocate for getting outdoors – I’ve always had a passion for giving back. This aspiration helped make the decision to focus my energy in supporting a non-profit the right choice when moving to Virginia. Professionally, I’m a certified public accountant with an extensive background in finance, operations and team development as well as strategic project execution. I have spent more than 20 years in numerous leadership roles. Prior to relocating, I was with a multinational publicly traded wine company leading a global team reaching consumers in over 70 countries with a growing focus on sustainability.

I couldn’t be more thankful for the opportunity and respectful of the responsibility to lead us into the future. This is a great time to be part of the Garden! Thank you to our staff, NBG Members, NBG Board of Directors, donors and volunteers for your continued support and being a part of our Garden family. Together let’s Build & Plant The Garden of Tomorrow!
NBG Board Vice Chair Vickie Matheis and her husband Dennis Matheis, President & CEO of Sentara Healthcare, graciously opened their home for the NBG annual board meeting. They are also major donors and supporters of The Garden of Tomorrow. Thank you to Vickie and Dennis! You thought of every detail making this Luau-themed party the perfect celebration to send Michael P. Desplaines to California, thank Clenise Platt who ended her term as NBG Board Chair and welcome Peter Schmidt as President & CEO, as well as introduce two new board members.

Board member and Vice Chair Vickie Matheis and her husband Dennis hosted the annual board meeting.

Michael P. Desplaines is congratulated by NBG President & CEO Peter Schmidt.

Christine G. Willamson was welcomed as a new member of the NBG Board.

Board Treasurer LaMont Henry sharing a laugh with former Board Chair Clenise Platt.

L-R: Stephanie McSweeney—Development Committee Chair, Vickie Matheis—Vice Chair, Lin Miller—Landscape Committee Chair, Jillian Swenson—Board Chair, Peter Schmidt—President & CEO, Cathy Fitzgerald—Chief Operating Officer & Executive Vice President of Philanthropy, LaMont Henry—Board Treasurer, Beth Turnbull—board member and Maria Hillebrandt—new board member.

The DIG • Norfolk Botanical Garden
CONSERVATION in Action

One of the rarest plants in the world is the *Osa pulchra*, an ornamental beauty with trumpet-shaped blooms and a sweet aroma. It is a member of the Rubiaceae family and is native to Costa Rica. Unfortunately, there are only 30 known specimens remaining in the wild. This incredibly low number has caused it to be listed as endangered on the International Union for Conservation of Nature’s (ICUN) Red List of Threatened Species. There are several botanical gardens, including New York Botanical Garden (NYBG), that are helping save this plant from extinction.

Norfolk Botanical Garden is partnering with NYBG and others to take critical action. Working with Fairchild Botanical Garden in Florida, another of our conservation partners, our Curator of Herbaceous Plants Michelle Baudanza contacted an ethical seed source based in Germany. Michelle applied for a permit through the United States Department of Agriculture and was granted authorization to purchase seeds. It was quite the journey, from Germany through Atlanta, which is our receiving port, and finally to Norfolk. The seeds traveled over 5,000 miles in their month-long journey.

There are only a handful of botanical gardens in the country that have this endangered plant as part of their collection. The seeds arrived safely and are now germinating; it may take up to three months to see growth. If all goes well, guests will soon see this plant, and many other rare specimens, in the new Perry Conservatory. This 26,000 square foot space will house and protect some of the most threatened plants from around the world, demonstrating conservation in action.
The Madagascar palm is not actually a palm at all, but rather a succulent with a dramatically spiny trunk, crowned by a cluster of foliage that grows in a palm-like manner reaching heights up to 24 feet tall. When the white flowers bloom, they only add to its exotic appearance. It is native to the spiny forests of Madagascar where it has adapted to a unique, but harsh environment. According to the IUCN Red List, this species is considered threatened due to habitat loss and poaching for the ornamental plant trade.

Being an island that has been geographically isolated for eons, Madagascar is home to many plant and animal species that occur nowhere else on Earth. Unfortunately, it is estimated that only 10% of Madagascar’s land remains in its original natural state.

**Showy Medinilla/Rose Grape**

*Medinilla magnifica*

Showy Medinilla is arguably one of the most beautiful epiphytes in the world. Once described as "the Rolls Royce of house plants," it’s easy to see why with its large, glossy-green wavy leaves and cascading pink blooms that somewhat resemble clusters of pink grapes.

While a showpiece of any tropical collection, this stunner is a rather delicate plant that is difficult to propagate and very particular about its growing conditions. Interestingly, the fruit of this beautiful plant is currently being studied for its flavonoids, tannins, saponins and alkaloids, all of which have significant promise in a variety of medical therapies.
Sustainability is the guiding principle when it comes to the design and construction philosophy for The Garden of Tomorrow buildings and surrounding landscape. This is all part of our ongoing efforts to reduce our ecological footprint and embrace sustainable alternatives. A particularly interesting standout in terms of unique applications of sustainable design strategies is the use of fungal mycelium to create natural lamp shades.

What does an actual mushroom have to do with a lamp shade? The two may seem light-years apart but there is a common thread, literally – it’s all in the mycelium! Mycelium is the vegetative part of a fungus that lives and thrives in the soil. It consists of a network of fine, thread-like structures called hyphae and serves as the primary means of nutrient absorption acting like a “root system” for the fungus. When certain species of fungi want to reproduce, they produce a mushroom from their mycelium. The common analogy often used to enhance the understanding of fungi reproduction is comparing mushrooms to apples on an apple tree. The mushrooms are like apples in that both are produced as a means of reproduction. Apples disperse seeds and mushrooms disperse spores. The mycelium is akin to the tree except with fungi, this would all be hidden underground. You can remove as many apples as you like but the tree continues to thrive. This is the same with mushrooms. Removing them has minimal impact to the thriving mycelium below ground.

The mycelium’s network also allows the fungus to decompose organic matter and interact with its environment. Because mycelium has the ability to be cultivated in various organic waste materials, like sawdust and coffee grounds, it reduces landfill waste. Its ability to self-assemble and bind with the waste material provides structural integrity, allowing it to be molded into various shapes. Plus, the light fixtures can be composted, returning nutrients to the soil, thus completing the ecological loop. These types of natural products are a way for us to reimagine a more sustainable future where we collaborate with nature and not extract from it.

Help us Build and Plant the future and support the Garden’s sustainability efforts.
BioLith from Biomason
Can you imagine a garden that grows its own cement? It may sound out of this world, but it’s possible. The company Biomason is able to grow cement using a technique similar to the natural process of growing coral. The production of cement, the binding ingredient in concrete, is considered the third largest source of carbon emissions, emitting more carbon than the aviation industry. Biomason’s patented technique of creating Biocement® eliminates the need to emit carbon.

Shou Sugi Ban — A Natural way to weatherproof & preserve wood siding
This Japanese process of preserving wood with fire dates back thousands of years. By burning the wood, the cellulose is removed thus preventing rot and pest issues. The treatment enhances durability and preserves the wood for upwards of a century. Conventional methods use harsh chemicals, paints or other toxic treatments that are harmful to the environment. This natural treatment will be used on selected exterior applications throughout The Garden of Tomorrow projects.

Bird Strike Mitigation
For some in the construction industry, it’s a mind shift to consider the building’s impact to the natural environment in which it is built. It’s imperative to take into account that the open space the building will eventually occupy is a space shared with our feathered friends who call the Garden home. It’s a good reminder that the natural world has its own inherent worth, independent of human interests, which emphasizes the need for a harmonious coexistence with other species.

Based on recommendations from the National Audubon Society, the windows of the Perry Conservatory will have a UV (ultraviolet) coating to mitigate bird strikes. This specialized coating contains an ultraviolet pattern that is visible to birds but appears transparent to the human eye. Birds have the ability to perceive ultraviolet light, and these patterns act as visual cues, warning them of the presence of glass surfaces. By making the glass more visible to birds, UV coatings significantly reduce the likelihood of collisions, protecting birds from injury or fatalities —exemplifying the Garden’s commitment to providing a safe and healthy habitat for wildlife.
Herpetology Survey

This June, scientists from the Virginia Herpetological Society, along with staff and NBG board members, surveyed our grounds to evaluate the diversity of reptiles and amphibians who call the Garden home. The team canvassed various habitat hotspots, cataloging all species encountered. This information will be featured in an upcoming society publication. Plans for future surveys are in the works.

Beehive Update

With the retirement earlier this year of our staff apiarist, Stephen Biela, Horticulturist III Bailey Bunn has taken over the reins. Bailey mentored under Stephen and took both the short and long beekeeping courses offered by the Beekeepers Guild of Southeast Virginia. She will assume his duties within the Guild serving as the Nuc (Nucleus Colony – a type of starter hive) coordinator and joining their board of directors. Even though Stephen has retired, he regularly stops by to help with the hives.

The Garden hives have been a bit of a challenge this year with re-establishing queens in four out of our nine hives and managing a couple of insect issues—wax moth and varroa destructor mites. Both issues are expected to be successfully resolved. One interesting highlight was successfully merging one of the queenless hives with a swarm. Despite these challenges, the hives are thriving and we were able to extract honey from four more frames than we did last year.
COMMUNITY Connections

Beach Cleanup
Organized by the City of Norfolk’s Conservation Park Rangers, NBG staff and Keep Norfolk Beautiful volunteers joined this community event specifically scheduled to clean up the beaches after July 4 festivities. Plastic trash collected will be used to help create a new environmental sculpture coming to the WOW Children’s Garden next year. The renown environmental artist Angela Haseltine Pozzi, who created the popular Washed Ashore: Art to Save the Sea exhibit displayed at NBG in 2021, will make this unique artwork.

Our grant-funded Workforce Training Program with Teens with a Purpose (TWP) is underway. The teens are learning the fundamentals of horticulture with hands-on training and exploring career opportunities available in the green industry.

TWP member rescued a wandering rusty crawfish and returned him to Friendship Pond.

NBG staff and Keep Norfolk Beautiful volunteers helped clean beaches at Norfolk’s 13th View Beach Access in Oceanview on July 7th.

NBG Director of Youth Education Beverly Albright (right) speaks to students at Malibu Elementary School.

NBG Staff L−R: Guest Services Assistant Zane Denny, Community Engagement Manager Taylor Lyons and Education & Community Coordinator Nicole Moore engaged with over 250 attendees at PrideFest this June.
SAVE the Date

15TH Annual WPA Garden Heritage Celebration

Sunday, September 17TH
2:00–3:00 PM

Scan code below to reserve your timed-entry ticket

Join us in honoring the 220 African American original Works Progress Administration (WPA) workers who cleared the land and planted the first azaleas in the late 1930s. The Garden is offering complimentary admission from 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. on this day in celebration of their legacy. Due to The Garden of Tomorrow construction and limited parking, please reserve your free timed-entry ticket in advance. Refreshments are available following the ceremony.

Sponsored By:

TRUIST

Learn More

Mirror Lake circa 1938
Norfolk Botanical Garden (NBG) is proud to announce that a new name has been added to the known WPA workers name list. Mr. Wyatt Mason was recently added making him the 74th person to be recognized out of 220 African American WPA workers – 200 women and 20 men. A descendant of Mr. Mason reached out to us believing him to be one of the 20 men who worked at NBG in the 1930s. Dr. Martha Williams, author of the *WPA Original Gardeners*, NBG President’s Council on Inclusion and Diversity (PCID) member and historian, confirmed that Mr. Mason was indeed part of the WPA workforce at the Garden.

We need your help continuing to tell the story of the hard work of the men and women of the WPA who cleared debris and planted the first flowers here at the Garden. During this time in history, a time of segregation, they were not allowed to visit the Garden and enjoy the beauty they helped create. Many workers did not share with family members that they were part of the WPA and the lack of employee documentation has made the search for names difficult. The PCID committee has worked diligently for more than 15 years to share this story with the community with hopes of discovering more names, but we still have a lot of work to do! There are 146 WPA workers still unknown. If you believe a family member was a WPA worker in the 1930s at NBG, please email us at marketing@nbgs.org.

In Memoriam: Garnzie West

Garnzie West passed away on July 19, 2023. He served on the NBG Board of Directors as a Norfolk City appointee from May 2008—May 2011. Originally from Halifax, North Carolina, he relocated to Norfolk where he was very active in his neighborhood, serving as the president of the Coronado/Ingleneok Civic League for 25 years. He was admired for his passion to create better communities throughout the City of Norfolk.

Garnzie was also a committee member of the President’s Council on Inclusion and Diversity. He and other committee members were instrumental in telling the story of the African American men and women of the WPA as well as commissioning the WPA statue *Breaking Ground* which depicts a female WPA worker from the 1930s. He was passionate about this story and finding the names for all 220 WPA workers. We will continue to raise awareness of our story and uncover more names of these forgotten people. Garnzie’s smile lit up a room and his jovial personality won people over very quickly. We are very thankful for his many years of service to NBG and his civic engagement throughout the City of Norfolk.
**September**

The Korean sweetheart tree (*Euscaphis japonica*) was first introduced to this country by the late plantsman extraordinary J.C. Raulston who brought seeds back from Korea to grow at the North Carolina State Arboretum (now known as the JC Raulston Arboretum). Despite its rare and exotic nature, it is very easy to grow in our climate. The flowers bloom in late spring, but some might say they lack traditional sales appeal. However, the fruits they produce are very showy, heart shaped and turn a beautiful red in late summer to fall. We have found that just one sweetheart tree will sulk and is a bit of a lonely heart not producing much fruit. However, plant two near each other and it is true love at first sight. There is a beautiful Korean sweetheart tree to the right of Rose Garden Hall facing the parking lot.

**October**

One of the benefits of gardening in our climate is that Mexican bush sage (*Salvia leucantha*) is a hardy perennial here and not an annual like it is further north. It usually starts blooming in September, peaks in October, and can often last into November. It has velvety purple and white flowers that are accentuated by its silvery foliage. The blooms attract flower arrangers, hummingbirds and butterflies; however, by this point in the year, the last two of those creatures need to be thinking about preparing for winter. Mexican bush sage does best in full sun, and it must have good drainage, especially in winter. Though it will take the occasional drought, it does best with even moisture. There are some nice specimens in our Kitchen Garden and in the Administration Welcome Garden.

**November**

Most hydrangeas are known for their wonderful flowers and the oakleaf hydrangea (*Hydrangea quercifolia*) is no exception. It is the earliest hydrangea species to bloom with cone-shaped flowers that start off a fresh pale green, mature to white, and gracefully age to dusty pink or red, eventually becoming a handsome straw color in the fall. While the flowers are showy, it is the only hydrangea to have attractive fall foliage in shades of red and burgundy tinged with orange on leaves reminiscent of oaks. Also unusual for a hydrangea, this species has attractive exfoliating bark that keeps the plant interesting through the winter months, making it a true four-season plant. Although it is native to the Deep South, it thrives here. While we have them planted in many spots, the best are at Rose Garden Bridge and in the Colonial Garden.

**December**

Red hot pokers, also known as torch lilies (*Kniphofia* species and hybrids), are exotic South African natives that do very well in Coastal Virginia. They are long-lived perennials and old-fashioned favorites valued for their bright tropical colors and the drama they add to both gardens and flower arrangements. While most bloom in mid to late spring, and some into the summer, the gambler among them is *Kniphofia sarmentosa ‘Valdosta Strain.’* This variety always rolls the dice and waits until just before the first deep freeze to bloom. The flowers are worth the wait with their large orange heads and their propensity to morph into unusual forms. See them while you can in the Matson Garden or in the Conifer Garden.
At this time of year, many of us are cleaning out the bird feeders and filling them with fresh food for our feathered friends. This is a great way to help the local bird population make it through the colder months ahead. However, you can also help them by adding a variety of plants to your garden that will provide food during the fall and winter. There are many native plants that fill this purpose and also provide beauty in the landscape. The species listed below can easily be found at local garden centers.

**Red Chokeberry** (*Aronia arbutifolia*) — This medium to large shrub will reach 6-8’ tall by about half as wide, preferring full to partial sun, and it is tolerant of many soil types. In the spring it is covered in clusters of white flowers, and in fall the foliage turns attractive shades of orange and red. Birds relish the dark red fruits.

**American Beautyberry** (*Callicarpa americana*) — Growing wild in many parts of Coastal Virginia, this plant shines in late September and October with its crayon-box purple berries. Reaching 6-8’ tall and wide, it prefers full to partial sun in moist soil.

**Flowering Dogwood** (*Cornus florida*) — The tree is not only our state tree and flower, but its bright red fruits are an excellent source of nutrition for birds. Averaging about 20’ tall, it prefers filtered light in soil that is neither too wet nor dry.

**Purple Coneflower** (*Echinacea purpurea*) — Although this perennial is native to the prairies, it does really well in Coastal Virginia. Give purple coneflower full sun in well drained soil and it will provide showy flowers all summer. Leave the spent flowerheads on through the fall and winter, as the seeds will provide food for several species of birds.

**Black-eyed Susan** (*Rudbeckia species*) — Like its close cousin, purple coneflower, this is another easy to grow, common perennial. Showy flowers bloom from early summer through fall in full sun and well drained soil. Again, leaving the spent flowers provides food for many of your feathered friends.

**Joe Pye Weed** (*Eutrochium species*) — There are several species of this native perennial, all of which have large clusters of mauve-colored flowers blooming in late summer. These flowers attract numerous butterflies and the ripe seeds are a feast for goldfinches. They prefer full to partial sun in moist soil. Give them plenty of room, even the dwarf varieties get big.

**Winterberry** (*Ilex verticillata*) — Unlike other hollies, this one is deciduous, but that makes it easier to see its numerous bright red berries. Growing 8-10’ tall, this shrub prefers full to partial sun in moist to wet soil. Like most hollies, you will need a male plant nearby to pollinate the females.

**Yaupon Holly** (*Ilex vomitoria*) — This large shrub or small tree is a great choice for gardens in areas where salt spray or tidal flooding are an issue. The evergreen female plants of this species have glossy red fruits. Growing up to 20’ tall, it prefers full to partial sun and is tolerant of a wide range of conditions.

**Virginia Creeper** (*Parthenocissus quinquefolia*) — This last plant is a vine and more than likely you don’t need to buy it. Virginia Creeper grows just about anywhere—a garden left untended will soon have some. That said, it is worth keeping one or two around for its fantastic fall foliage and the number of birds who love its fruit. Give it something to grow on, as it can reach up to 40’ and is not very picky about soil or light.
GARDEN TO-GO KITS
September 7 – 10
Pickup September 14 – 16

ONLINE BULB SALE
October 6, 7 & 8
Pickup Oct. 12, 13 & 14

IN-PERSON TREE/SHRUB SALE
Friday, Oct. 27 – Sunday, Oct. 29

VOLUNTEER Spotlight
Cynthia Kurlas
Norfolk Botanical Garden could not do what it does without our incredible volunteers! Even better is when you have a dedicated and passionate volunteer who has logged over 300 hours with us this year.

We are honored to spotlight Cynthia Kurlas from Virginia Beach who frequently explored the Garden for the past 35 years while visiting her parents and moved to the area last year whereupon she immediately started volunteering. Cynthia loves gardening and experiencing all the joys of being outside and watching the results of her hard work come to fruition. She values the opportunity to learn from some amazing and knowledgeable staff. Her favorite time in the Garden is when staff and volunteers plant together as a group and seeing what great things can happen when people work as a team.

“I enjoy getting my hands dirty and being in nature – each season has its own surprises and rewards,” Cynthia said.

If you would like to be part of our incredible Volunteer Team, contact Taylor Lyons, Community Engagement Manager or call 757-441-5830, ext 364.

ART in BAKER HALL
Included with Garden Admission

NOW — SEPTEMBER 30
A Colorful Collaboration

Vibrant Acrylic Paintings by
Bethany Simpson and Jennifer W. Klein

Garden to-go Kits

Online Bulb Sale

In-Person Tree/Shrub Sale

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Expressions in Oil & Beyond

By Various Artists of The Coastal Virginia Artist's Guild

OCTOBER

Expressions in Oil & Beyond

By Various Artists of The Coastal Virginia Artist's Guild

NOVEMBER — DECEMBER

Mixed Media Paintings by Amy Twisdale

Garden to-go Kits

Online Bulb Sale

In-Person Tree/Shrub Sale

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Leaving a Legacy

The Evergreen Society recognizes and celebrates an outstanding group of friends who generously support the Garden beyond their lifetimes.

Evergreen Society Members

If you are interested in learning more about the Evergreen Society, or letting us know about a gift in your estate plan including IRA's, please contact cathy.fitzgerald@nbgs.org.


Tribute Opportunities

The beauty, wonder and serenity of the Garden combine to create a perfect setting to honor a loved one, pay tribute to a friend, or mark a special anniversary or milestone. Select from a number of sites in the Garden to place our teakwood bench, complete with commemorative plaque. Please call Cathy Fitzgerald at 757-441-5830 ext. 319 or email her at cathy.fitzgerald@nbgs.org to make an appointment to discuss this $25,000 tribute opportunity.

In Memoriam: Richard Evans

Richard began volunteering in February 1994 and contributed 6,000 hours of service over his 26 years at the Garden. His work mainly focused on caring for the Garden’s vast and diverse rose collection. Originally from England, he demonstrated his love and passion for roses by sharing his lifetime of knowledge with guests and staff. Richard was influential to our horticulture staff, regularly serving as a mentor to new staff and volunteers. Because of this passion and dedication, The Margaret Moore Hall Bicentennial Rose Garden is more beautiful than ever.

Evans not only devoted thousands of hours to the Garden, but supported the Garden financially. He and his late wife Eleanor contributed to the creation of “The Richard and Eleanor Evans Great Lawn” which features a towering metal tree structure and six arches adorned with climbing roses. This area was carefully designed with bench seating, inspiring guests to connect with nature for years to come. Mr. Evans also purchased our first-ever electric public tram that will debut when The Garden of Tomorrow opens in 2025. This electric tram will demonstrate environmental action and continue our work to create a greener and more sustainable future. Richard was a great friend to the Garden and is missed by many. His legacy will continue to grow with the thousands of blooming roses that he appreciated so very much.
Gift Shop Member Appreciation

HOLIDAY SALE

NOV. 4TH & 5TH

Purchase a unique gift for someone special this holiday season. Members receive a 20% DISCOUNT on all regularly priced merchandise for a ONE TIME shopping spree in the Gift Shop. Give the gift of Membership - it’s the gift that keeps on blooming all year long.

"10 Botanical Gardens with WOW-Factor Winter Transformations"
— Fodor’s Travel

MORE lights, MORE immersive, MORE experiences!

GARDEN of LIGHTS
WALK THE GARDEN AGLOW

Beginning November 10

Tickets On-Sale Oct. 1st
NBGLights.org

USA Today/10Best contest winner!
NBG Members always Receive the best deal!