

# norfolk botanical garden

## HORTICULTURE HIGHLIGHTS

### Horticultural Highlights, Mid-Fall 2023

#### Fall Foliage – Garden Wide

Although there is lots of fall foliage color in the Garden right now, we will likely not reach peak fall color until sometime between early and mid-November. Some of the best places to enjoy it are Mirror Lake, The Enchanted Forest, The Glade, Shady Woods, and along the road between the Hofheimer Camellia Garden and the Rhododendron Garden.

#### Sasanqua Camellias – Hofheimer Camellia Garden

Just as many other plants are turning brown and going dormant, fall blooming camellias (*Camellia sasanqua* and hybrids) color the landscape with pinks, reds, and whites. While the flowers are smaller than the more familiar Japanese camellias, there are more blooms per plant on sasanquas, plus they are delightfully fragrant.

#### Purple Hyacinth Bean – Tram Stop 5, 6, and 7

Grown by Thomas Jefferson, this easy-to-grow annual vine (*Lablab purpureus*) has lots to offer. The green leaves are veined with purple and supported on purple stalks. The light purple and white flowers bloom freely and produce striking purple seed pods. The pods are filled with handsome black and white beans.

#### Encore Azaleas – NATO Triangle and Garden-wide

We all recognize azaleas as one of the icons of the spring garden, but Encore azaleas have been bred to bloom in the fall and summer as well. Other than bloom time, they are the same as most other azaleas.

#### Hardy Chrysanthemum – Border Garden and Baker Perennial Garden,

Just about everyone is familiar with fall mums, you can barely leave the grocery store or hardware store without running into rack of them. While these will come back in Coastal Virginia, they take a lot of work to look the same. Hardy chrysanthemums are blooming right now, and with no effort on the part of our gardeners. Look for 'Ryan's Pink', 'Hillside Pink Sheffield', or 'Cambodian Queen'.

#### Raydon's Favorite Aster – Canal Walk, Conifer Garden

We have to agree with Raydon, this particular aromatic aster (*Symphotrichum oblongifolium*) is our favorite as well. Stunning, billowy clouds of purple blue flowers are blooming right now, attracting numerous beneficial pollinators trying to get another meal in before cold weather gets here.

#### American Beautyberry – Pollinator Demonstration Garden

Clusters of colorful fruit adorn the branches of this native shrub (*Callicarpa americana*) every year in early fall, and they are the perfect shade of crayon-box-purple. Not only are they attractive to humans, but several bird species enjoy the ripe fruit. As an added bonus, the foliage has mosquito repelling properties

### 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 and well into fall many varieties are in full flower.

### Lion's Tale – Fragrance Garden

Even though this unusual plant (*Leonotis leonurus*) hails from South Africa and is happier in that climate, it can be hardy in Coastal Virginia if it is sited where it gets some winter protection in extremely well drained soil. In mid-fall it is covered with bizarre, but very attractive, bright orange flowers.

### Crabapples – Flowering Arboretum

Although they are famous for their spring flowers, crabapples (*Malus* species and hybrids) are covered in fruit, and yes, they are indeed apples, just small ones. Once a more commonly seen tree, especially for smaller gardens, they have lost favor with landscapers due to disease issues. However, many of the modern cultivars are more disease resistant.

### 'Victory' Pyracantha – Border Garden

Dripping with red-orange fruit, the ungainly pyracantha (*Pyracantha koidzumii* 'Victory') can't decide if it wants to be a shrub or a vine. The birds don't care, they just bid their time waiting for the fruit to ever so slightly ferment. Once it crosses that threshold, then an avian feast begins. Not only do they relish the fruit, but pyracantha makes for good shelter being evergreen and thorny, protecting them from both cold weather and predators.

### Moss Paths – Rhododendron Garden

Moss thrives in soil that is compacted, shaded, and acidic. In fact, this ancient evergreen grows where many other things will not. In the Rhododendron Garden, a series of our Horticulturists have spent years encouraging it to grow by watering it during droughts, keeping fallen leaves from smothering it, and patching bare spots with moss from elsewhere. All those years of diligence have paid off, and now we have paths covered by green carpets. Take a look for yourself, and no one will mind if you take off your shoes for a stroll.

### Salt Bush – Lake Whitehurst Shoreline, and Garden-wide

Each fall, this underappreciated native shrub (*Baccharis halimifolia*) fills local shorelines with clouds of white flowers. It grows where few other plants survive, along the wet upper edges of salt marshes and other wetlands.

Wildlife Watch – At NATO Pond you can use the wildlife viewing platforms to see a variety of aquatic turtles. Despite how much they might beg, please do not feed them.

*Les Parks, Director of Horticulture*