

norfolk botanical garden

HORTICULTURE HIGHLIGHTS

Horticultural Highlights – late February to early March 2025

Camellias – Hofheimer Camellia Garden

These old Southern favorites are actually native to China, Japan, and Korea. Camellias (*Camellia japonica* and hybrids) are prized for their large showy, winter and spring-blooming flowers. The recent cold temperatures may have damaged any flowers that were open, but the foliage and buds are fine, with many are in bloom again. Although they are planted throughout NBG, the best place to see them in the Hofheimer Camellia Garden. NBG has an internationally recognized camellia collection with 1400 different varieties and over 2000 individual.

Hybrid Hellebores – Winter Garden, Baker Hall Terrace, Purity Garden

There are many species and varieties of hellebore (*Helleborus*), and as a group they tend to be tough, shade-loving, evergreen, and rarely plagued by insects, disease, deer, or rabbits. However, the best thing about them is that they bloom in the dead of winter when most perennials are still very much dormant.

Sarcandra – The Glade, Winter Garden

With its bright orange-red berries and evergreen foliage, *Sarcandra glabra* is a standout in the winter landscape. It is native to Southeast Asia where it has long been used medicinally, and now its healing properties are being investigated by Western medicine. Regardless, it is very pretty.

Witch-Hazel – Winter Garden, Baker Overlook

Most of what can be seen in the Garden are hybrids of various Asian species, but Virginia is home to two native species (*Hamamelis virginiana* and *H. vernalis*). Typical colors can include yellow, orange, and red. Deliciously fragrant they are rarely bothered by cold weather. Come back in the fall to enjoy their colorful foliage.

Colorful Conifers – Conifer Garden, Garden-wide

While we have conifers throughout our 175 acres, the best place to see them is in the Conifer Garden. In the winter the foliage of many conifers intensifies in color and you can see rich silvery blues, dusky purples, and golden yellows.

Winter Jasmine – WOW, Holly Garden

This plant (*Jasminum nudiflorum*) actually started blooming for us in January, as it does every year, regardless of the weather. Bright yellow flowers cover evergreen stems on a sprawling haystack of a shrub. Thrives on full sun and neglect.

Laurustinus – Border Garden

Covered in masses of dusky pink buds, laurustinus (*Viburnum tinus* 'Compactum') will soon be covered in clusters of small blush white flowers. This evergreen is one of many notable members of the large *Viburnum* family, and it makes a great alternative to some of the more overused foundation shrubs commonly planted.

Daffodils – Garden-wide

We are seeing these harbingers of spring popping up all over the Garden. Peak season is usually in March when we will be celebrating Daffodil Daze, but by planting different varieties with different bloom times, you can have daffodils blooming from January through April.

Japanese Flowering Apricots – Blocker Terrace, Japanese Garden, *Le Jardin*

Native to China and grown extensively in Japan, Japanese apricots (*Prunus mume*) are revered in both countries for their winter blooms, reminders that change is on its way. They come in shades of red, pink, or white, but as colorful as they are, your nose may notice them first. They are delightfully fragrant!

Orchids – Tropical Display House

The weather may be cold outside, but it is balmy in our Tropical Display House, and that is just how the plants in there like it, including our exotic orchid collection. At this time of year they begin their main bloom season, which usually peaks in March. As winter turns into spring, stop by often to see what might be in bloom.

Coral Bark Japanese Maple – *Le Jardin*

While most Japanese maples (*Acer palmatum*) are noted for their spring and fall foliage, this one (also known as 'Sango-kaku') is famous for its handsome coral-red stems which become particularly colorful in cold weather. You should see them covered in snow!

Fatsia – Infinity Garden, Border Garden, Garden-wide

For gardeners with dense shade and root competition from large trees, it can be hard to find tolerant broadleaf evergreens. However, fatsia (*Fatsia japonica*) can handle it, all while giving your garden a tropical look. Earlier in December they flowered, attracting insect pollinators, and now their handsome green seedheads are gracing the plants. Later these will ripen and turn almost black, providing welcome food for songbirds.

'Townhouse' Crapemyrtle – Matson Garden

When it comes to crapemyrtles, they are primarily known for their summer blooms. However, they can be just as stunning in the winter when the muscular structure of their bare branches can be seen. In addition, many varieties have striking bark, and one of those is our state champion 'Townhouse' (*Lagerstroemia fauriei* 'Townhouse') located in the Matson Garden. It's rich coffee and caramel colored bark is a real standout in the winter landscape, add a dusting of snow around its base, and you have magazine-worthy photo op!

Wildlife Watch – Herons and egrets are always present along the causeway leading into the Garden. Here two parts of Lake Whitehurst meet creating a pinch point where fish concentrate, making it easy for the shorebirds to find breakfast.

Les Parks, Vice President of Horticulture