

# norfolk botanical garden

## HORTICULTURE HIGHLIGHTS

### Horticultural Highlights – June 2025

#### Hydrangeas – Kaufman Hydrangea Garden

June is peak bloom here for most *Hydrangea* species, and our Kaufman Hydrangea Garden has many different varieties. Right now, the big leaf hydrangeas (*Hydrangea macrophylla*) are the showiest and the most colorful.

#### 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 some varieties begin in June.

#### Chinese Evergreen Dogwood – Kaufman Hydrangea Garden

Most people are familiar with our native flowering dogwood (*Cornus florida*), the state flower of Virginia, which has a reputation for being finicky to grow. However, the Chinese evergreen dogwood (*Cornus elliptica*) is easy to grow, as long as it is given some shade. The flowers bloom weeks after our native, it keeps its leaves year-round, and it produces handsome red fruit later in the summer.

#### Roses – Bicentennial Rose Garden

Although our rose collection is just a little past its Mother's Day peak bloom, there is still a lot of fragrance and color to enjoy.

#### 'Peggy Martin' Rose – Cobblestone Bridge

During Hurricane Katrina, Ms. Peggy Martin's New Orleans garden was flooded and remained under saltwater for several weeks. There were only 2 plants to survive, and one was this rose, a.k.a. The Hurricane Katrina rose. We have found it to be exceptionally vigorous, a long bloomer, and virtually disease free, but give her room – she grows how she wants.

#### Daylilies – Baker Perennial Garden

Daylilies (*Heemerocallis* species and hybrids) are one of the easiest, most satisfying, and most colorful perennials. Our large collection in the Baker Perennial Garden would not be possible without the support we have received from the Tidewater Daylily Society.

#### Japanese Iris – Border Garden, Boat Basin

Japanese iris (*Iris ensata*) have large, broad, flat blooms, perfect for looking down on and photographing. Like many iris species, these prefer to grow in moist to wet soil, and over time each clump will grow bigger allowing the gardener to divide and share with friends.

#### 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.

### Crinum Lily – Baker Perennial Garden, Boat Basin, Conifer Garden

Crinums (*Crinum* species and hybrids) are native around the world in tropical areas. Over the years they have been bred and hybridized for increased hardiness and flower power. They have long been an old Southern favorite with their bold strap-like foliage and showy pink, to red, to white flowers.

### Hostas – Statuary Vista, Admin Welcome Garden, Garden-wide

This familiar garden perennial prefers shady locations, especially in Southern climates. Grown primarily for their diverse foliage textures and colors, there are several thousand different varieties to choose from. While NBG does not have quite that many, it does have enough to qualify as designated hosta garden, so says the American Hosta Society.

### Southern Magnolia – Flowering Arboretum

This is one of the classic trees (*Magnolia grandiflora*) of Southern gardens. Large white flowers are open now, and they have an intoxicating fragrance. Evergreen, native, wind-resistant, they are easy to grow in full sun to partial shade. However, they can be very messy. Even though they are evergreen, the leaves will drop, just not all at once, and they take a very long time to decompose. If the branches are allowed to remain low to the ground this will hide many of those fallen leaves.

### Sweetbay Magnolia – Garden-wide

Unlike the messier Southern magnolia, the sweetbay is native to Coastal Virginia. In fact, its botanical name, *Magnolia virginiana*, indicates that it is from this area. The foliage can be deciduous or evergreen, and the flowers are remarkably fragrant, and the cone-like pods can be showy with their bright red fruit. Supremely well adapted to this area, they are one of the best trees for local landscapes.

### Desert Willow – NATO Bridge

Although this unusual small tree (*Chilopsis linearis*) is native to the Southwest U.S., it is also perfectly at home here at NBG. It is covered in pink flowers now, and this particular specimen also happens to be another of our state champion trees.

### Pitcher Plants – Va. Native Plant Garden, WOW

Looking as if they are from another planet, these carnivorous plants (*Sarracenia* species and hybrids) have a sinister architecture. Insects looking for an easy meal are lured into the pitcher-like structure of the plant. Once inside they find the sides are lined with downward facing hairs that make it nearly impossible for the insects to leave the plant. Eventually they fall into a pool of digestive juices at the bottom of tube where the plant will make a meal of them.

### Butterfly House

Our Butterfly House officially opens for the season on the 15<sup>th</sup> of June. There, you can not only see a wide variety of native butterflies, but you can also see their caterpillars and **chrysalises**, learn which plants they like, and you can talk with knowledgeable volunteers. You can also see why our butterfly house was voted the best in the country by readers of USA Today!

### Bonsai Collection – Transition Garden

NBG has a unique bonsai collection that is managed by our in-house bonsai specialist, and 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 garden plants growing in our gardens or nursery.

Wildlife Watch – NBG is home to a number of turtle species. At this time of year, you can see many searching for mates, looking for places to lay eggs, investigating new food sources, and searching for new territories to call home.

*Les Parks, Vice President of Horticulture*