

## Horticultural Highlights – Early March 2026

### 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 past few months of below freezing weather has not been kind to our collection's flowers. However, buds that were tight and unopened through the cold will open and bloom as the temperatures moderate. Although they are planted throughout NBG, the best place to see them in the Hofheimer Camellia Garden.

### Hybrid Hellebores – The Winter Garden

Within the past few decades plant breeders have been busy with different *Helleborus* species, crossing them back and forth, looking for something new and different. In our Winter Garden you can see some of the results of this effort with varieties that are reliably evergreen, sterile (will not seed around), bloom earlier, and with upright flowers on sturdy stems you can actually see without having to get down on your knees.

### Witch Hazel – Winter Garden, Baker Overlook, Conifer

These great plants are reliable winter bloomers. 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 extreme cold. Come back in the fall to enjoy their colorful foliage.

### Magnolias – Flowering Arboretum, Garden-wide

These are mostly different Asian species and hybrids of saucer and star magnolias. Always dependent on the temperatures, this year they are going to be a little late due to this winter's sustained cold. However, once the temperatures moderate, you can expect a colorful show.

### 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

Each winter, this plant (*Jasminum nudiflorum*) graces us with bright yellow blooms on evergreen stems. It is a sprawling haystack of a shrub and not for gardeners who like neat and tidy control. However, for those that like carefree abandon, no matter the time of year, it is perfect. Thrives in full sun with neglect.

### Flowering Quince – Canal Walk, Baker Overlook, The Border Garden

Flowering quince (*Chaenomeles* species and hybrids) is an old favorite noted for its ease of growth, reliability, and for its usefulness in flower arrangements. The colors range from white to pink, red to orange, and even peach.

### 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, typically mid-March is their peak season, but with the colder winter we have had, they might be just a bit late this year.

### Baby's Breath Spirea – Sensory Garden

Delicate white flowers open in late winter, and it is the first spirea (*Spiraea thunbergii*) to bloom. 'Ogon' has pure white flowers which will later be followed by handsome chartreuse foliage. 'Fujino Pink' has pink buds that open to blush white flowers, then next December the foliage will turn multicolored shades of red, orange, and yellow.

### Cornelian Cherry – Picnic Area

Although the common name for this plant might lead you to believe it is a cherry, it is actually an Asian dogwood (*Cornus mas* 'Spring Glow'). With its bright yellow blooms, it is one of the earliest of the small flowering trees to show its colors. By the way, that common name comes from the showy red fruit that will form later this summer.

### Winter Daphne – The Glade

This plant (*Daphne odora*) has a well deserved reputation for being finicky. Not too wet, not too dry, not too sunny, not too shady, and even when the stars align and a perfect spot is found – they can die for no apparent reason. So why bother? The thickly sweet fragrance is profound, one plant capable of perfuming an entire garden. Pro-tip: once planted, never say its name, just enjoy.

### Edgeworthia – Winter Garden, Statuary Vista

This plant is sometimes referred to as paperbush, but so are other plants, so we stick to with its botanical name of *Edgeworthia* to avoid confusion. The silvery buds form in December and open in mid to late winter with clusters of golden yellow, sweetly fragrant flowers. It is one of our favorite winter blooming shrubs.

### Ornamental Cherries – Japanese Garden, Boat Basin, Canal Walk, Arboretum, Garden-Wide

At the moment, the autumn flowering cherry (*Prunus subhirtella* 'Autumnalis') and the Okame cherry (*Prunus x incam* 'Okame') are blooming. Next, the weeping cherries (*P. subhirtella* 'Pendula') will start later in the month, followed by the Yoshino cherry (*P. x yedoensis*). The Yoshino cherry is the classic tree that many are familiar with, and it is also the variety planted around the Tidal Basin in Washington, D.C. Keep an eye out for the larger, pinker blooms of the Kwanzan cherry (*P. serrulata* 'Kwanzan'), the last cherry of the season which blooms in early April. The beauty of cherry blossoms is fleeting so don't miss out!

### Japanese Flowering Apricots – Le Jardin, Baker Terrace, Japanese Garden

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, but don't delay – their blooms don't last long!

Wildlife Watch – Bald eagles can often be spotted flying over the Garden. These magnificent birds mate for life, and currently Virginia has about 1100-1500 active breeding pairs. In the late 1970's the state had fewer than 30 breeding pairs. You can thank effective environmental regulations for this remarkable comeback.

*Les Parks, Vice President of Horticulture*