

# DIG

MAY–AUGUST 2026

**GROW**  
Course  
Catalog

**norfolk  
botanical  
garden**

**CHIHULY GLASS**  
Artwork Installed

**WOW CHILDREN'S  
GARDEN**  
Turns 20



## On the Cover: Flower of *Harrisia Fragrans*

Recently, Perry Conservatory Director Michelle Baudanza secured a very rare addition to the Perry Conservatory collection through a valued partnership with Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden: *Harrisia fragrans*, a critically endangered cactus, once native to coastal Florida. Sadly, its range is now limited to a single county in Florida, St. Lucie County, where habitat loss from overdevelopment and natural disasters has confined its remaining population to a fragile strip of land less than one mile long.

*Harrisia fragrans* produces large, fragrant white flowers that bloom at night, followed by large, brilliant red edible fruit. Like many other cacti, it often grows beneath protective “nurse plants” such as scrub oaks, which offer shade and shelter that it depends on to thrive.

We are thrilled to showcase this special cactus in the Perry Conservatory for the powerful conservation story it tells. Visitors can look forward to learning more about this species and the urgent importance of protecting the habitats that sustain plants like it through upcoming tours and programming.



1. Top of flowering branch of *Harrisia fragrans*.
2. Top of fruiting joint of *Harrisia fragrans*.

(All natural size ~)

**LEWIS  
GINTER  
BOTANICAL  
GARDEN**

Illustration from Britton, Nathaniel Lord; Eaton, Mary E.; Rose, J. N.; Wood, Helen Adelaide (1919). *The Cactaceae: descriptions and illustrations of plants of the cactus family*.

# From the **PRESIDENT**

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It is hard to believe the moment has arrived.

After years of thoughtful planning and dedication from so many, we are preparing to welcome you to experience ***The Garden of Tomorrow***.

Many of you believed in this dream from the very beginning and helped bring it to life. Because of your support and shared commitment, we are now excited for you to discover what The Garden of Tomorrow has become.

This milestone also reflects the extraordinary dedication of our staff, volunteers and supporters who have worked tirelessly to make this vision a reality. Their care for this Garden and belief in our mission have made this moment possible.

As late summer approaches, you will soon experience all that The Garden of Tomorrow has to offer. In this issue of our Dig member magazine, we share photos and stories as we prepare for our grand opening.

We are especially excited to welcome our members first during exclusive member preview days in August. We anticipate strong visitation and will offer timed ticketing for the Perry Conservatory, home to our new Chihuly: Perry Collection. Timed tickets are free to members and ensure every guest enjoys a comfortable and truly immersive experience.

Inside the Perry Conservatory, an innovative digital interactive installation brings plants and their “superpowers” to life, revealing the remarkable roles plants play and why protecting them matters.

From the Brock Entry Pavilion to the Perry Conservatory, the Batten Sky Meadow and the Kay & Al Abiouness Skywalk, there is something for everyone. Thanks to Joan Brock’s generosity, we are also introducing a new tram to make exploring the Garden easier for all.

The Brock Environmental Education Center will create new opportunities for students and families to connect with nature through immersive, hands-on learning designed to spark curiosity and discovery.

This year we also celebrate the 20th anniversary of the WOW Children’s Garden, where young explorers ignite their imagination, connect with nature, and create lasting memories.

This moment belongs to all of us. Thank you for believing in this vision and helping bring it to life.

This new chapter strengthens Norfolk Botanical Garden’s role as one of the great gardens of the United States, and I look forward to welcoming you.

With gratitude,



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**BOTANIC  
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# CONSERVATION in Action

Several signature desert specimens, including saguaro (*Carnegiea gigantea*), agave (*Agave* spp.), cholla (*Cylindropuntia acanthocarpa*), palo verde (*Parkinsonia microphylla*) and Jojoba (*Simmondsia chinensis*) were sourced through Native Resources International, an Arizona-based native plant reclamation firm.

Responsibly salvaged from the Sonoran Desert near the Superstition Mountains Valley, these protected plants were in the direct path of development and removed under strict permitting laws. Instead of being lost, they now live on at NBG!



Giant saguaro in its native landscape.



Bloom of a saguaro.  
(Photo by Ken Bosma, CC-BY-2.0)



It was an exciting day when plants arrived from Arizona to be installed in the new Perry Conservatory desert biome.

## Arid Zones & Desert Homes: What's the Difference?

**Arid** – a dry climate with very little rainfall

**Desert** – a place shaped by a dry climate

**Arid is the condition. Desert is the landscape it creates.**

### Arizona & Mexico

Sonoran Desert

**Rainfall:** 3-15 inches/year

**Climate:** Arid

**Biome:** Desert

### Western Kansas

Mid-West United States

**Rainfall:** 15-20 inches/year

**Climate:** Semi-arid

**Biome:** Grassland

### Norfolk, Virginia

Norfolk Botanical Garden

**Rainfall:** 45-50 inches/year

**Climate:** Humid

**Biome:** Temperate Forest



Jojoba (*Simmondsia chinensis*) packed in a crate for the journey to the desert biome at NBG.



Palo verde (*Parkinsonia microphylla*) tree in bloom.

(Photo by MiriamMirandaV, CC-BY-4.0)



Agave (*Agave* sp.)

## On three . . . one, two three! **IRONWOOD** arrives in the desert biome



Ironwood trees (*Olneya tesota*) are hallmarks of the Sonoran Desert and vital resources for wildlife. As nurse plants, they shelter young desert plants, helping them survive in a harsh environment. Yet the enduring heartwood of a fallen ironwood may be an even more extraordinary wonder. Natural mineral deposits within the heartwood render it highly resistant—and even toxic—to decomposers such as fungi and termites. As a result, the trunks weather at an almost imperceptible pace, lasting for centuries and sometimes more than 1,600 years.

The trunk displayed here is estimated to be nearly 300 years old. So massive that it required twelve staff members to carry it into the desert biome, the trunk had to be split in half to pass through the doors — ultimately creating two striking focal points. It was rescued from imminent destruction caused by urban development in the Apache Valley/Superstition Mountains region of Arizona's Sonoran Desert. Its size, sculptural form, age and remarkable life history make it a compelling conversation centerpiece in the new Perry Conservatory.

The ironwood tree is listed as Near Threatened on the International Union for Conservation of Nature's (IUCN) Red List of Threatened Species because of overharvesting for fuel, illegal collection for the tourist trade and habitat loss from expanding urban development.

# CHIHULY

*The Perry Collection*

## One of the most significant permanent collections in the United States

In March, the Chihuly Studio team was on-site to begin installing works from the newly acquired Perry Collection. These works and *The Garden of Tomorrow* will be unveiled later this year.



Installation of the *Tropical Green and Cobalt Chandelier* in the tropical biome, viewable from the second-story walkway.



Left: *Opal and Primrose Spire Towers* installed within a bed of rare cacti in the desert biome.

Below: Dena Rigby, owner of Dena Rigby Fine Arts LLC, is an art advisor who works nationally with private, civic, and corporate clients. Acting as the Art Advisor for *The Garden of Tomorrow*, Rigby worked on the Garden's behalf to acquire the site-specific installations by Chihuly, aligned with the Garden's mission and history.



# HORTICULTURE Highlights

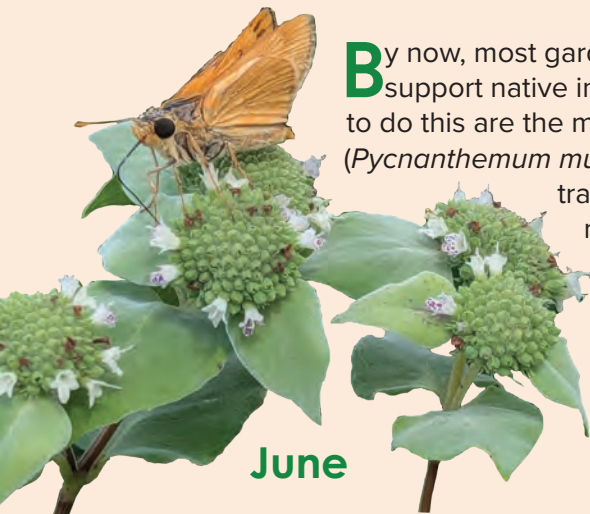
Les Parks, Vice President of Horticulture

**F**ound more commonly in gardens farther South, we are very lucky to be just warm enough to grow star jasmine (*Trachelospermum jasminoides*). In late spring to early summer, the flowers of this evergreen vine begin to open, perfuming the Garden with a very sweet fragrance. The aroma is strong and can be described as a cross between mint and vanilla. As its name implies, the five-petaled flowers are star-shaped, and they open a milky white and age to a pale yellow. Though it superficially resembles other jasmines, it is not really a member of that family. Star jasmine is vigorous and needs something sturdy to grow on like a trellis, or even up the trunk of a loblolly pine, which is how we are growing them in the Circle Garden here at NBG.



May

**B**y now, most gardeners should have gotten the message that they need to attract and support native insect pollinators to their gardens. One of the absolute best group of plants to do this are the mountain mints, and at the top of the list is short-toothed mountain mint (*Pycnanthemum muticum*). Their pale pink flowers have a subtle beauty, but they will not stop traffic, at least not people traffic. Pollinating insects, on the other hand, will not be able to resist them, and when this plant is in full flower the number of different species visiting the blooms is remarkable. The foliage has a handsome silvery color and a strong, but pleasant minty aroma. Best planted in gardens where it has room to spread, short-toothed mountain mint can be vigorous. Although we have it planted in a number of areas, the best place to see it is in our Pollinator Demonstration Garden near the Butterfly House.



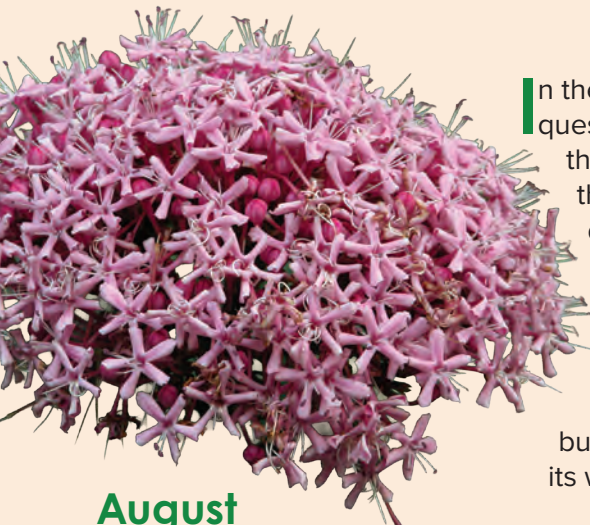
June

**L**ong after azalea season is over, plumleaf azalea (*Rhododendron prunifolium*) comes into bloom. Brightening shadier parts of the Garden, the flowers appear in clusters and are a fiery red to orange, attracting Hummingbirds and a variety of bees to the blooms. Although the plant is native to Georgia and Alabama, it does very well in other parts of the south, including Coastal Virginia. Like most of our native azaleas, this species is not evergreen. The best place to enjoy them at NBG is in the back of the Wildflower Meadow close to Lake Whitehurst.



July

**I**n the course of their day, our horticulturists are often stopped and asked questions. Guests are frequently looking for directions, the quickest way to the WOW Children's Garden, or they need help locating a restroom, but they most often have plant questions. In August, one of the most common questions is what is that plant growing in the asphalt near the NATO Bridge and the Colonial Garden. Rose glower bower (*Clerodendrum bungei*) is a beautiful name, for a beautiful plant, but planted anywhere, it would be considered a weed. This plant is a runner, and being surrounded by cobblestones and asphalt keeps it in check. Clusters of beautiful hydrangea-like, pink blooms attract not only Garden guests, but loads of butterflies as well, and its beauty helps horticulturists overlook its weedy nature.



August

## BENEFICIAL NEMATODES: Biological Pest Control

Horticulture staff at NBG are using a natural form of biological pest control in the desert biome of the conservatory called entomopathogenic, or beneficial, nematodes. These microscopic roundworms help manage a variety of soil-dwelling pests while remaining completely safe for beneficial insects, animals and people.

Beneficial nematodes are effective against common pests such as grubs, thrips, weevils, fungus gnats and many types of fly larvae. By using this fast-acting, biological solution, NBG reduces the need for chemical pesticides and supports a more sustainable, environmentally friendly approach to plant care. An added benefit is that pests do not develop resistance to this natural method of control.

Once introduced into the soil, the nematodes actively seek out target pests. After entering the pest, they release naturally occurring bacteria that quickly stop the pest from feeding and lead to its decline within a few days. The nematodes then reproduce and the next generation moves through the soil to continue managing pest populations.

This ongoing, natural cycle allows our horticulture team to protect plant health in a way that aligns with our commitment to sustainability and responsible stewardship. Reference: *Beneficial Nematodes for Pest Control*. (2025). Koppertus.



NBG horticulture staff treat the soil in the desert biome with a liquid mix of beneficial nematodes.



Image by Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organization (CSIRO), CC-BY-3.0.

## Shoreline Restoration: Coming Soon



The Kenneth A. and Patricia A. Hall Charitable Foundation Shoreline Restoration & Boardwalk, featuring Trex recycled decking, will address shoreline erosion and provide an immersive experience connecting guests with the water. This will expand our established kayak program and create more opportunities for NBG led kayaking experiences. *More information about Trex later in this publication.*

# Community CONNECTIONS



Stride Towards A New Direction (S.T.A.N.D) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to community well-being and mentoring youth. These young volunteers assisted staff with planting daffodil bulbs in November as part of the World Daffodil Project. Within just a couple of hours, this mighty group planted a total of 500 bulbs in our new Brock Parking Garden. The bulbs bloomed and delighted visitors in March.



Over 200 Girl Scouts visited the NBG table at the Northwest River Park in Chesapeake last October.



Guest Services & Tour Operations Coordinator Andramada Sanchez assists an eager participant in making a nature-themed pin at the Winter Wildlife Festival in Virginia Beach.



Horticulturists Dan (L) and Jake (R) share information on fall foliage at Norfolk's Arbor Day Festival.  
*(Photo provided by City of Norfolk)*



Adult Outreach Manager Nicole Moore tests plant knowledge with a fun game of Jeopardy at the Norfolk's Jam'n Jamz free tree giveaway event.



## Environmental Partner

### A Big Thank You to Trex

We extend our sincere gratitude to Trex for their generous donation of decking materials for several key projects within *The Garden of Tomorrow*, including the Kay and Al Abiouness Skywalk, the front entry bridge and decking for the future boardwalk—part of The Kenneth A. and Patricia A. Hall Charitable Foundation Shoreline Restoration & Boardwalk, slated to open later this year.

Trex's commitment to sustainability and environmental stewardship aligns beautifully with the Garden's mission, and we are deeply thankful for their partnership in helping bring these spaces to life.



## Decking made with up to 95% recycled materials

Trex is a company based in Virginia and the world's largest manufacturer of wood-alternative decking and railing. As a leader in high-performance, low-maintenance outdoor living products since 1996, Trex melds innovation with environmental responsibility and beautiful form with powerful function to fundamentally change the way we live outdoors.

*“At Trex we’re all about creating durable, sustainable products that bring people together and transform outdoor spaces, and The Garden of Tomorrow is a prime example.”*

— Amy Fernandez, Chief Sustainability Officer and Chief Legal Officer for Trex Company



**WORLD OF WONDERS**

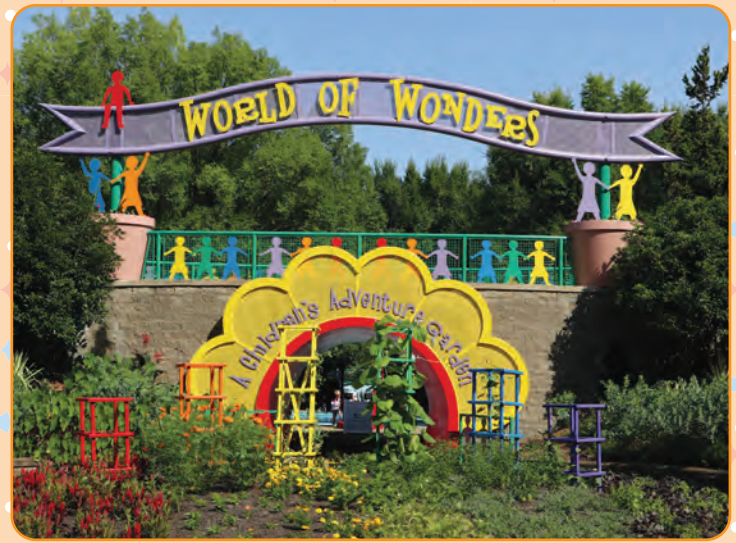
**A Children's Adventure Garden**

# URNS 20!

In September 2006, the 3-acre World of Wonders (WOW) Children's Garden opened to the public, offering a new space for children and families to learn, play and grow together. For the last 20 years, WOW has continued to transform into a thriving space to splash in the fountains, engage the imagination in the barnyard playhouses, travel the world in the Passport Gardens and explore animal habitats in Plant Safari.

Features have been added or changed over the years to meet the shifting trends in nature play and learning. The goal of the WOW Children's Garden will always be to engage learners of all ages and abilities with the outdoor world through immersive activities and programs. As part of the WOW Children's Garden 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary, Youth Education Department staff want to thank the NBG members, students, Scouts, class participants and all other visiting guests who have walked through the red tunnel entrance.

## HERE'S TO THE NEXT 20 YEARS!



*"We've been enjoying the gardens since 2017 to the present! We love being members here every year. Happy anniversary!"*

— Ashlee S.



*"This is our grandson, Travis in 2006 when the WOW Garden opened. He is now 23 and enjoys bringing his dog on Sundays when he visits from Baltimore."*

— Marianne S.



*"Here's a photo of my son, Asher, enjoying the gardens this past summer when he was 1 year old. He LOVES WOW - we spent a ton of hours there last summer. Thank you for providing such a fun place for our kids to make wonderful memories!"*

— Danielle H.





# HAPPY BIRTHDAY



*"My daughter is just a little caterpillar on her way to big adventures. She loves coming to WOW and now shares that joy with her little sister and its the sweetest!"*

— Rita C.



*"As the child of a long-time NBG WOW employee, Alice spent many hours in WOW, often providing a kid's expertise and feedback to activities as they were being planned and as they evolved over the years."*

— Jen E.

*"Thank goodness for the WOW Garden! My husband is in the Army and spent a good bit of time deployed while our two sons were very young. NBG was my go-to place to entertain the kids while he was away. No matter the season, there was always something to keep them occupied. Their absolute favorite was the "frog bog" bridge. They had to work together to pull it from one side to the next. The WOW Garden, and Norfolk Botanical Garden as a whole, was an absolute lifesaver. My kids are 16 and 17 now but still have great memories of the Garden. Happy 20<sup>TH</sup> anniversary to WOW!"*

— Laurie V.



# ART in BAKER HALL

NOW — May 28

*Flora, Fauna, Fables and the Sea*  
by Chris Jeanguenat • Below: *Longing*



April — June  
*Echoes of Earth*

Works by Green Run  
Collegiate Students



May — July  
Works by Southside  
Artist Association

Right: *Dance of the  
Pansies*  
Watercolor by  
MaryLous Andrews



August — Sept.  
*Bloom*  
by Jaida Garrison



All art on display in Baker Hall is  
included with Garden Admission

# THANK YOU NBG FOUNDATION

The Norfolk Botanical Garden Foundation is a separate entity dedicated to advancing the mission and focusing on the long-term financial sustainability and longevity of the nonprofit organization.



Left to Right: Foundation members Caroline Oliver, Dick Phillips, Peter Schmidt, Ryan Snow, Michael Kearns and Clenise Platt take a tour of the tropical biome of the new Perry Conservatory.



# LEAVE YOUR LEGACY

By including a gift to Norfolk Botanical Garden in your will or estate planning, you help preserve the natural beauty and biodiversity of our landscapes for future generations. Your support will contribute to vital conservation efforts, ensuring that the Garden remains a sanctuary for people and wildlife. For more information, please contact Leslie Van Horn at (757) 441-5830 ext. 341 or by email at [leslie.vanhorn@nbgs.org](mailto:leslie.vanhorn@nbgs.org).

## Thank You for joining the Evergreen Society

Dan Allison, Annette Averitt, I.M. & Sarah Lee Baker, Ty & Martha Brown, Elizabeth Bruce, Blanche C. Chappell, Robert & Janie Creecy, Cindy Cutler & Craig Haines, Sandra L. Dashney, Michael Desplaines & Jason Robinson, William W. Eley, Richard & Eleanor Evans, Cathy Fitzgerald, Joe Foreman, Charles & Karin Fleischman, R. Michael & Patricia Fuller, Ernie & Robin Franklin, Jane Frazier, Robert M. Gostel, Craig & Sue Grube, Randy Harrison, June Hoye, Kit E. Johnson, Karen S. Gershman, Karen L. Hines, Edward C. & Betty Lou Johnston, Sr., Patricia A. Kiefer, Patty L. Landrum, Virginia T. Lawrence, Eleanor Marshall, Bee McLeod & Goody Tyler, Rick Morsink, Susan Elise Morton, Andrea and Andrew Nelson, Nancy Nelson, Edward & Gayle Nichols, Susan L. Oldridge, Dana Parker, Dick and Laura Phillips, Stephanie Pope, Mildred Amsinger Powers, Judy Pravecek, Kathleen Keogh Rahman, Ann Rathbone, Pamela Read, Alan Rohanna, Peter & Sasha Schmidt, Kurt & Debbie Schroeder, Sam Strickland, George & Nancy Sutcliffe, Sylvia E. Simons Trembelas, Jim & Christian Valone, Henry & Eleanor Watts, Richard & Ann Weber, Christine Williamson, Pearl Windle, 3 anonymous.

## 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 on-site locations to place our teakwood bench, complete with commemorative plaque. Please call Leslie Van Horn at 757-441-5830 ext. 341 or email her at [leslie.vanhorn@nbgs.org](mailto:leslie.vanhorn@nbgs.org) to make an appointment to discuss this \$25,000 tribute opportunity.

# BUTTERFLY FESTIVAL



**Sunday, June 14  
10AM – 4PM**

In partnership with the Butterfly Society of Virginia, this event incorporates fun educational programs, activities and Butterfly House tours.

# VIRGINIA HONEY BEE FESTIVAL



**Saturday, August 15  
10AM – 4PM**

In partnership with Beekeepers of Southeast Virginia, guests of all ages will learn about honey bees and their important role in our environment through hands-on activities and live demonstrations.

**norfolk botanical garden**

6700 Azalea Garden Road • Norfolk, VA 23518

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## 11<sup>TH</sup> Annual Rotary Club of Norfolk's Suds & Buds

**Thursday, May 7 • 5:30PM - 8:30PM**

### Three Great Causes, One Great Party!

Each year, the Rotary Club of Norfolk and Norfolk Botanical Garden team up with a different nonprofit partner to produce one of Hampton Roads' Premier Spring Charity Events.

Featuring local restaurants, craft beer, wine and live music, Suds & Buds has raised nearly \$300,000 for local charities since its inception.

Event proceeds will support the Rotary Club of Norfolk, Norfolk Botanical Garden and The Sarah Michelle Peterson Foundation.

