

SEPT—DEC 2026

norfolk
botanical
garden

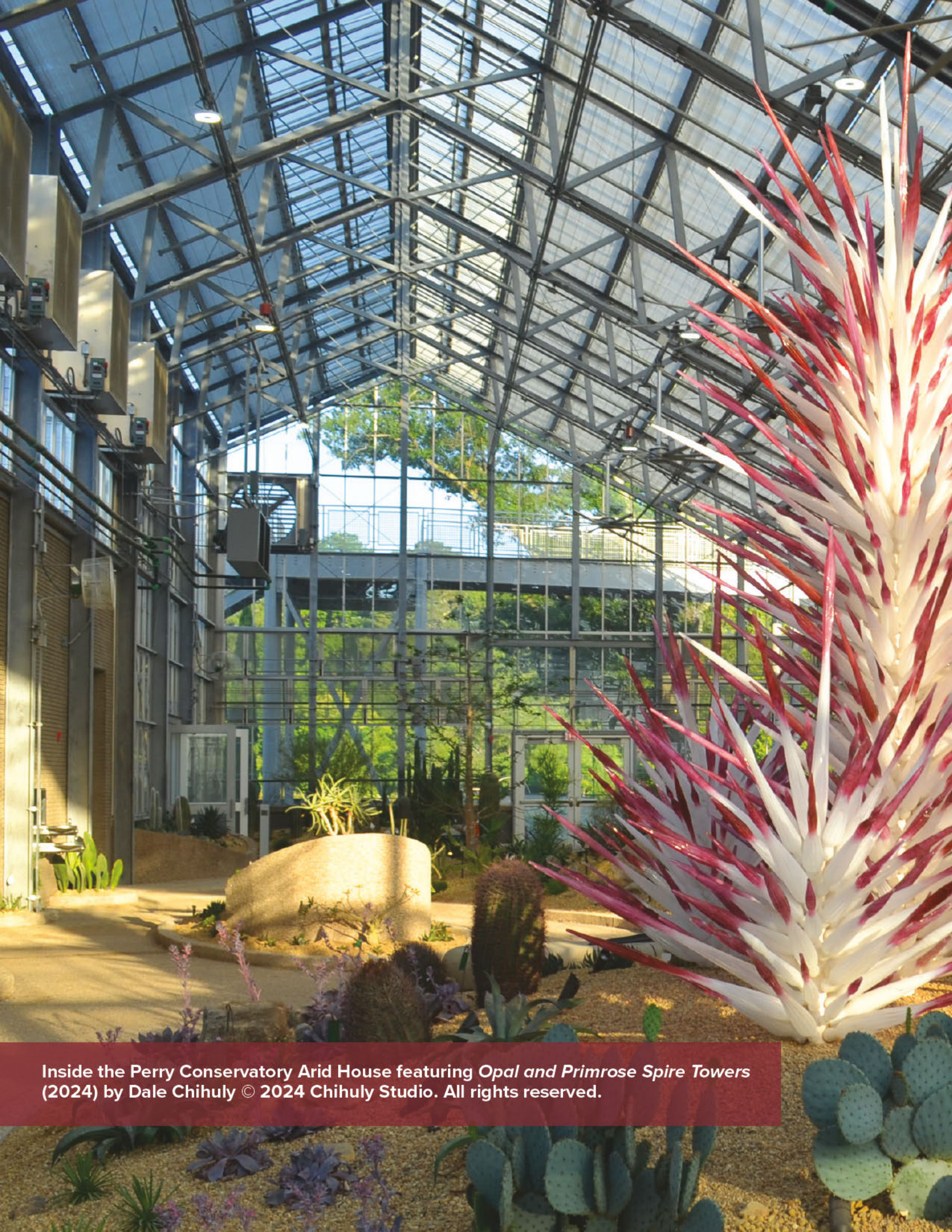
ART BEGINS WITH NATURE

THE GARDEN OF TOMORROW GRAND OPENING EDITION



On the cover and here: Inside the Perry Conservatory Tropical House
featuring *Paradise Pink Trumpet Flowers* (2024) by Dale Chihuly
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Inside the Perry Conservatory Arid House featuring *Opal and Primrose Spire Towers* (2024) by Dale Chihuly © 2024 Chihuly Studio. All rights reserved.

The Garden of
Tomorrow

Grand Opening Celebration • September 12 & 13

Sponsored by
 Dills Architects



"Norfolk Botanical Garden is such a beautiful location. It's a pleasure to not only present my work there, but to see it become a part of the Garden's permanent collection and its history—particularly the *Chiffon and Sangria Azalea Chandelier*. I'm honored that future visitors will have the chance to see it for themselves."

— Dale Chihuly

Photo: Dale Chihuly, *Chiffon and Sangria Azalea Chandelier* (detail)
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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 ***The Garden of Tomorrow***, opening Sept. 12, 2026.

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

This milestone reflects the extraordinary dedication of our remarkable staff, volunteers, Board of Directors, supporters, community partners and cultural partners, all of whom have worked tirelessly to make this vision a reality.

From the moment you arrive, you'll experience a Garden designed to inspire wonder through nature, art, discovery and a sense of wellness and peace. Whether you're pausing at the new Reeds Bistro, exploring a favorite garden path, or simply taking in the beauty around you, every visit offers an opportunity to reconnect with the natural world and with one another.

Inside the Perry Conservatory, CHIHULY: The Perry Collection creates an inspiring connection between art and nature. An innovative digital interactive installation also brings plants and their "superpowers" to life, revealing the remarkable roles they play and why protecting them matters.

The Brock Environmental Education Center creates opportunities for students and families to connect with nature through immersive, hands-on learning designed to spark curiosity and discovery. By inspiring wonder today, we are cultivating the next generation of environmental stewards.

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. As we celebrate this milestone, we're excited to expand opportunities for children throughout the Garden in the years ahead. Aspirations like these are made possible by dedicated supporters like you and we look forward to continuing this journey.

This moment belongs to all of us. Thank you for believing in this vision and helping bring it to life. As a special thank-you to our members, we hope you'll join us for exclusive member hours as we open the new Perry Conservatory. This will be our chance to celebrate this remarkable milestone together.

With gratitude,

Peter Schmidt



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THE REEDS BISTRO

"Reeds is about great food, warm hospitality, beautiful surroundings and flavors that reflect the Garden in a way that feels thoughtful but never complicated."

— Chef Steve Jefferys

Why "REEDS"?

Reeds are more than just plants. Naturally growing in wetlands, they create rich ecosystems that support wildlife and nurture the environment.

The bistro's name also honors the stunning Chihuly installation titled *Turquoise Reeds on Logs* (2017) located in the new Brock Entry Pavilion. The flowing, elegant glass sculpture mirrors the beauty and vitality of the Garden—and the dining experience Chef Steve hopes to create. It is a name that reflects the life of the Garden and the artistry it inspires.



Above: Light fixtures made of mushroom mycelium shine on the sustainably sourced interior design materials used throughout the new Reeds Bistro.

Step into the new **Reeds Bistro** at Norfolk Botanical Garden, where dining is inspired by the landscape itself. Surrounded by natural light, organic textures and views of the Garden in bloom, guests are welcomed into a space that feels elevated and approachable.

At the heart of the experience is a menu rooted in seasonality—vibrant, thoughtfully composed dishes that reflect the colors, textures and rhythms of the Garden just outside.

At the helm of this culinary venture is Chef Steve Jefferys, senior director of food and beverage operations, and a restaurant industry veteran with more than three decades of experience. Working alongside him is Chef de Cuisine Mary Zaragoza. They are shaping a menu that reflects their shared culinary vision, with offerings designed to highlight the Garden.

"Our goal is for dining to feel like a natural extension of the Garden itself," Steve Jefferys said. "From flavors inspired by the landscape to a service culture that mirrors the warmth and hospitality that the Garden is known for, we want every guest to feel the magic of nature at their table."



Guests can look forward to breakfast featuring artisan pastries and a curated coffee selection, satisfying lunches and a twilight menu that evolves with the seasons. But what truly sets Reeds Bistro apart is Chef Steve's dedication to the story behind every ingredient. Local farms, plants that thrive in the region, and collaborations with neighboring growers and artisans form the backbone of each dish.

Reeds Bistro will be more than a restaurant—it will be a creative, sensory experience. “The dishes will not just taste great, they will help guests understand the deeper connection between the Garden and what they have on their table,” Chef Steve said. “It’s about bringing the Garden to life through food, showing how sustainability, creativity and storytelling can coexist on a plate.”

Sustainability is at the forefront of the bistro's philosophy. From sourcing local and seasonal ingredients to growing supplementary produce on-site and collaborating with nearby farms, the bistro reflects the Garden's commitment to environmental stewardship.

The **Reeds Bistro** is designed to be more than a place to dine—it's a place to pause, connect and experience the Garden in a new way. Enjoy a quiet morning coffee, a leisurely lunch or an evening meal as the light fades over the landscape, every visit offers something different. It's a destination where hospitality, culinary craftsmanship and the beauty of nature come together, inviting guests to return again and again.



The brief but spectacular

Reign of Lady Macdeath



a rare corpse flower (*Amorphophallus titanum*)



Photo by NBG Events Designer/Horticulturist
Linda Saunders



A rare botanical spectacle happened at the Garden in July. Over 8,000 guests experienced the magnificent bloom, survived the stench and learned about this endangered plant. Nicknamed "Lady Macdeath" she was the talk of the town on the radio, in the news and social media.



Lady Macdeath received her royal name from Horticulturist Jake Litchfield. It was the name that received the most votes from her adoring public via social media.

Thanks to WVEC
Channel 13 for
providing a live feed
to share the bloom
experience online.



Conservation & Education Fund

As a nonprofit organization, the Garden launched its Conservation & Education Fund to support plants such as the corpse flower.



Donations support the care of our living collections that include rare and endangered plants, builds awareness for their survival, expands educational opportunities and inspires a deeper connection to the natural world. Your support helps ensure these extraordinary plants, such as the corpse plant, have a tomorrow.



The Garden opened at 7 a.m. on July 5, 2026 for members to get a sneak peak at Lady Macdeath. After her bloom, she was carefully dissected and put on display, along with educational signage including its unique lifecycle.



Many thanks to our Bloom Experience Sponsor:



With fewer than 1,000 in the wild, this plant originates from one of the most biodiverse areas of the world, specifically the island of Sumatra located in Indonesia. Its habitat has been drastically reduced because of deforestation for palm oil plantations.

The Garden's specimen was generously donated by the United States Botanic Garden in Washington, D.C. When NBG received the plant, it was in a dormant, rootball state shown below. It may not bloom again for another 10 years.



“Botanic gardens are great at connecting people and plants, and when we collaborate, the dividends are even greater,” said Devin Dotson, senior communications specialist at the United States Botanic Garden. “It’s a joy collaborating with Norfolk Botanical Garden, getting to share with even more people these remarkable plants, their beauty, and the conservation challenge they face.”



UNITED STATES
BOTANIC GARDEN

REFLECTION

BEER ECTION

International Sculpture
Showcased at NBG



Contemporary artist Anton Bakker stands alongside his mirror-polished stainless sculpture *Reflection*, recently installed in the Margaret Moore Hall Bicentennial Rose Garden.

In the Rose Garden

Nestled among the blooms of the rose garden is a new sculpture, *Reflection*. It is a striking sculpture by internationally acclaimed artist Anton Bakker, a longtime supporter of Norfolk Botanical Garden.

Visitors may already recognize Bakker's work from sculptures displayed throughout the Garden's 175 acres. Known for creating pieces that transform with every viewpoint, his mirror-polished stainless steel sculptures invite guests to slow down, explore, and discover something new from every angle.

Reflection has an international story. In 2023, it debuted alongside its companion sculpture, *Heptagon*, in the International Financial Centre Sculpture Park in Dubai as part of the exhibition *Tales Under the Gate*. Displayed together in

reflecting pools, the two works were created to explore themes of perspective, symmetry, and connection.

Following the exhibition, the sculptures began separate journeys. *Heptagon* was acquired by the Office of the President of the United Arab Emirates, while *Reflection* crossed the Atlantic to begin a new chapter at Norfolk Botanical Garden. Though now an ocean apart, the companion sculptures remain forever connected through their shared design and vision.

Today, *Reflection* stands at the center of its own reflecting pool, surrounded by roses and benches that invite visitors to pause and experience the ever-changing interplay of light, water, nature and art. Like the Garden itself, the sculpture reminds us that beauty—and connection—can transcend distance and be discovered from every perspective.

Thank you to Conrad Hall who made a significant gift to enhance the rose garden. His gift was matched by several other foundations. The Halls have been supporters of the Garden for over 30 years, and the Margaret Moore Hall Bicentennial Rose Garden honors his late wife, Margaret.



"I would like for people to look deeper, see patterns, keep looking and experience wonder, giving them a whole new vision and perspective. The symmetry we see in flowers is beautiful, and if people can see it through my work and I can show them new perspectives, then hopefully I have achieved something."

*— Anton Bakker,
contemporary artist*



Left: A view of *Reflection* from an opposite angle. Right: The companion sculpture *Heptagon*, featured in reflecting pool of the Dubai International Financial Centre Sculpture Park.

HORTICULTURE Highlights



September
Goldenrod (*Solidago*)

One of North America's most prolific native perennials, September is goldenrod's month to shine. Not just showy, the blooms provide a late season nutritional boost for beneficial pollinators. Later, the ripe seeds will provide food for birds through the winter. People sometimes confuse goldenrod with ragweed (*Ambrosia* species) and blame both for causing people to sneeze, as both share a similar bloom color and bloom time. However, ragweed relies on wind pollination, while goldenrod has sticky pollen that requires insects to do the work. One of the best and most popular goldenrods is 'Fireworks' (*S. rugosa* 'Fireworks') which has unique sprays of horizontal flowers. While 'Fireworks' is planted in many places at NBG, the Baker Perennial Garden has the largest concentration.



October
Hearts-a-burstin' (*Euonymus americanus*)

The *Euonymus* family is globally very widespread, and some of its members have a deserved bad reputation, either for being invasive or insect prone. However, there is a species native to Coastal Virginia, *Euonymus americanus*, that deserves to be appreciated more than it is, especially at this time of year. While the summer flowers are not terribly showy, its fall fruits certainly are with bright red-pink seed capsules that split open revealing clusters of red-orange seeds. It's very dramatic. This fruit gives rise to a number of illustrative common names including strawberry bush, hearts-a-burstin', hearts-a-busting, and bursting-heart. It is deciduous, but the stems will stay green through the winter. Most at home in woodlands, you can see this plant for yourself in the wooded area adjacent to NBG's Colonial Garden.



November
Arkansas bluestar (*Amsonia hubrichtii*)

Most perennials are grown for their flowers, and in fewer cases, for foliage alone. Rarely are perennials grown for their fall color. However, Arkansas bluestar (*Amsonia hubrichtii*) should be grown for all three reasons. The foliage emerges in spring, and typically by early May it is topped with clusters of star-shaped blooms. The flowers attract butterflies and are a delicate blue and a nice contrast to the dark green foliage. Speaking of foliage, it will add a fine, fern-like texture to the landscape, and given the plants size (2

to 3 feet tall and wide), it creates a presence even after the flowers are done. In late fall the real show begins. Arkansas bluestar is one of only a few perennials noted for attractive fall foliage. The entire plant turns a rich golden color in November before going dormant. You can see this richness for yourself in several places at NBG including Baker Overlook, Baker Perennial Garden and in the Batten Sky Meadow (opening Sept. 12, 2026).



December Foster holly (*Ilex x attenuata*)

First developed in the 1940s and 50s, Foster hollies (*Ilex x attenuata*) have become a popular landscape shrub. They are evergreen; have a naturally upright, pyramidal shape; they take pruning well; and they are well adapted to our climate. Unlike most hollies that require male and female plants near each other for good fruit set, Foster hollies are self-fertile females, and always produce a showy crop of bright red fruit. While not the birds' first choice for wintertime meals, when pickings get slim the fruit will get eaten. In the 1960s a new version was created at the U.S. National

Arboretum and was named 'Sunny Foster' for its bright golden yellow foliage. The combination of red fruit, golden leaves, and a strong upright habit make it a real standout on a dreary winter day. NBG has two very distinct specimens, one in The Border Garden, and one in Discovery Grove.

In the Perry Conservatory - Madagascar palm (*Pachypodium lamerei*)



The island of Madagascar, off the southeastern coast of Africa, has been isolated for 80 to 90 million years. This isolation has created a very unique environment for its plants and animals. In fact, 90% of the island's flora and fauna are endemic, meaning they only occur naturally in this one place. One of the unusual plants from this part of the world is the Madagascar palm (*Pachypodium lamerei*), which is not actually a palm, but a succulent that is well adapted to its hot, arid environment. Its entire swollen trunk is a water storage device covered in spines. These spines not only protect it from hungry animals, but they also trap oceanic fog, dripping water droplets onto the plant's roots. Madagascar palms photosynthesize in the traditional manner, but they also use an alternative method where the plant's stomata (pores) close during the day to prevent moisture loss, and open at night to take in carbon dioxide. Regardless of the science, this plant is quite unusual looking on its own. Add its fragrant white flowers, and it is a stunning, exotic addition to the arid house of the new Perry Conservatory.

Community ENGAGEMENT



Above left: NBG Educator Erika Phillips shared the history of wishing trees and encouraged Cherry Blossom Festival attendees to add a wish. Wishes ranged from world peace to hoping a loved ones wish would come true.



Above right: Adult Education Specialist Brittany Gernheuser represented the Garden at Live Green Norfolk. Community members made their own floral arrangements out of recycled containers using flowers from the Garden. Partnering with Rashida Bess of Alodeuri Artisan Jewelry, attendees decorated their containers.

LIVE
Green
NORFOLK



Left: Adult Outreach Manager Nicole Moore provides career and volunteer resources to students at the Virginia Beach Adult Learning Center and teaches them that they might know more about plants than they think through a fun game of jeopardy.



Above: Garden historian Martha Williams recently spent a morning with girls from S.T.A.N.D (Stride Toward A New Direction) teaching them about the Garden's WPA history. Using flowers from NBG, the girls each created boutonnieres to bring a bit of the Garden home with them.

Save the Date 18TH Annual WPA Garden Heritage Celebration

Sunday, Sept. 20 • 2–3 p.m.

Join us in honoring the Works Progress Administration (WPA) original gardeners who cleared the land and planted the first azaleas in 1938.
Light refreshments to follow.

Additionally, every year, Norfolk Botanical Garden President's Council on Inclusion and Diversity (PCID) presents the Groundbreaker Award – inspired by the WPA statue entitled *Breaking Ground*.

The award honors individuals, groups or organizations who demonstrate groundbreaking leadership and service to the community.

The annual PCID Scholarship is awarded to students who are pursuing careers in GREEN industries such as horticulture, environmental science and sustainable agriculture. The 2026 recipient will be announced during the celebration.



Right: PCID Committee Chair and NBG Board Member Dee Hall presents a check to Dave Davenport, winner of the 2025 PCID Scholarship. Dave is a student at North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University.



THE EMANCIPATION OAK

A National Treasure

Les Parks
Vice President of Horticulture

One of the downsides of living in or visiting Coastal Virginia is having to wait in tunnel traffic. This is especially so right now on I-64 in Hampton with the expansion of the Hampton Roads Bridge-Tunnel, the largest construction project in the history of Virginia. Most people don't realize that while they are waiting in line to get through, they are just a guardrail away from a living national treasure, the Emancipation Oak.

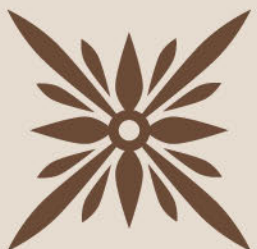
This massive tree is a live oak (*Quercus virginiana*) estimated to be about 300 years old. A storied species and icon of the Southern landscape, live oaks are most often seen draped with Spanish moss in places such as Charleston or Savannah. Coastal Virginia is the northern limit and beginning of its native range which extends along the Atlantic and Gulf coasts all the way to Texas.

While the age and size alone of the Emancipation Oak would make it a worthy tree, especially this far north, it is this particular tree's history that makes it a national treasure. The story begins with Mary Peake, a free woman of color born in Norfolk, educated in Alexandria, who eventually made her home in Hampton. Despite laws forbidding it, Peake secretly taught enslaved and free African Americans how to read and write in her home. During the Civil War, nearby Fort Monroe and much of Hampton became a Union-held refuge for formerly enslaved people. With her home and most of Hampton destroyed by retreating Confederate forces, Peake began teaching in the shade of the Emancipation Oak. Before her death in 1862, she created a school near the tree on the site of present-day Hampton University.

During Peake's life, the tree was just welcome shelter and shade. In January of 1863, it became the site of the first public reading of Abraham Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation to occur in the Southern United States, hence the name. It is a remarkable tree, with a remarkable history.



Photo of Mary Peake circa 1860.
Hampton University Museum Archives



Norfolk Botanical Garden is honored to have a small live oak sapling from this historic tree that is growing in our Virginia Native Plant Garden. It's within site of the new Perry Conservatory, the largest construction project in our own history. Mighty oaks from little acorns grow!



Above: Current photo of the Emancipation Oak near the entrance to the campus of Hampton University. It was designated a National Historic Landmark by the Department of the Interior and one of the 10 Great Trees of the World by the National Geographic Society. Photo by Les Parks.



Above: Historical photo of the Emancipation Oak. Image courtesy of the Hampton University Museum.



Right: This bronze statue of Mary Peake by artist Joh Hair is one of 13 statues he created for Legacy Park located on the campus of Hampton University. Photo courtesy of the Hampton University Museum.



FREQUENT FLYERS

Protecting Habitats, Helping Birds Thrive



Birds are some of the most visible indicators of a healthy ecosystem, and among the most enjoyable wildlife to observe. From the flash of a ruby-throated hummingbird near Baker Hall to the distinctive call of a pileated woodpecker in the Enchanted Forest, birds enrich every visit to the Garden while providing essential ecological services such as insect control, seed dispersal and sometimes even pollination. At Norfolk Botanical Garden, we are committed to creating habitats that support birds throughout their life cycles while helping visitors understand the connections between healthy landscapes and thriving wildlife.



One of the most important ways we support birds is by expanding the use of native plants throughout the Garden's landscapes and our communities. Native plants form the foundation of healthy food webs because they support the insects birds depend on, especially caterpillars. Research by entomologist Dr. Doug Tallamy found that a single pair of Carolina chickadees may need 6,000-9,000 caterpillars to raise just one brood of young! Imagine how many insects are needed to support larger birds and their populations! By planting natives, the Garden helps sustain the insects that feed birds and strengthen the entire ecosystem and by educating visitors on doing the same to multiply our impact.

Bird conservation also influences how we design and manage the Garden. The new Perry Conservatory features bird-friendly UV-coated glass to reduce window collisions, while Dark Sky compliant lighting helps minimize light pollution that can disorient migrating birds. We also monitor bird strikes across the Garden to guide future improvements, including expanding bird-safe glass treatments on existing buildings.

Education is central to our conservation mission. Through classes, workshops, guided experience and partnerships with other local organizations, visitors learn how native plants, sustainable gardening and thoughtful landscape design can create bird-friendly habitats at home. Bird conservation doesn't happen only in wilderness areas and natural spaces, it happens in public gardens, parks, neighborhoods and backyards. Every native plant installed and every effort to reduce human-made hazards contributes to healthier bird populations. As both a destination for people and a refuge for wildlife, Norfolk Botanical Garden is committed to creating spaces where birds and people can thrive together.



Look closely to see the dot matrix pattern of the UV-coating on the windows of the new conservatory.



Above: A great blue heron and a female mallard share space on the *Floating Futures* habitat in NATO pond. These islands were created by students in the Virginia Beach Environmental Studies Program, made possible by a generous grant from the Hampton Roads Community Foundation.

**Thank You for Voting NBG
Best Butterfly House & Garden
for a SECOND YEAR IN A ROW!**



Youth EDUCATION



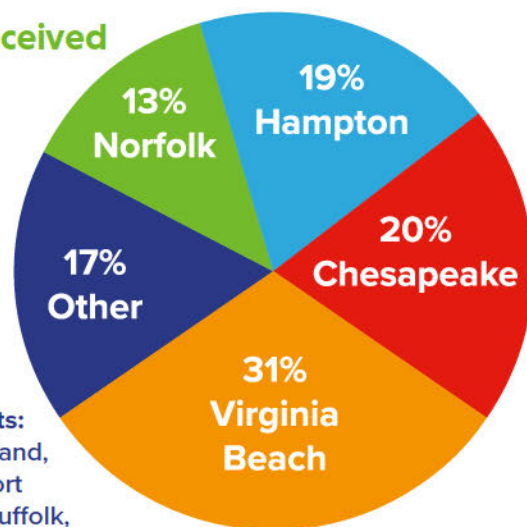
7,465 total students impacted through onsite field trips and outreaches

(5,156 students visited during the 2025-2026 school year)

765 Students received Day of Nature support

75 Unique Schools & Organizations

Other School Districts:
Cape Charles, Courtland, Isle of Wright, Newport News, Portsmouth, Suffolk, Williamsburg, Yorktown



Students to Stewards

Do you remember your first visit to Norfolk Botanical Garden? For many students who attend Hampton Roads schools, the first opportunity to visit our 175-acre campus is through a field trip program. Recognizing the unique opportunity to ignite a passion for environmental science and to transform the students into nature stewards, the Youth Education Department facilitates immersive, SOL-aligned learning experiences that reinforce classroom content and encourage engagement with science concepts in a real world, outdoor setting.

Learn & Grow School Garden

During the 2025–2026 school year, the Learn & Grow School Garden was added to the WOW Children's Garden to incorporate more gardening-specific programs for visiting students. Piloted by Title I kindergarten students through a partnership with Hampton City Schools, the Learn & Grow School Garden offered the opportunity to plant, water, weed, and harvest fresh fruits and vegetables. The added space also offers the chance to explore nutrition, the importance of making healthy food choices and encourage the students to discover and try new foods.



New Programs: Conservatories + Math in Nature

The 2026-2027 school year will offer one-of-a-kind opportunities for students with the anticipated opening of the Perry Conservatory. The Youth and Education Department is busy working to determine how these new space can support local students through immersive lessons with unique plant specimens and local and global human impact stores. The new school year will also include the addition of a "Math in Nature" field trip program. Through a pilot program in partnership with Holland Elementary in Virginia Beach, the Youth Education Department will also grow its STEM-aligned programming to explore the intrinsic ties between math and science in an outdoor space.

How can you help the forward momentum of Norfolk Botanical Garden field trips?

The Day of Nature scholarship program offers financial support for Title I students of all ages and abilities, and community organizations that work with under-served students and children. Through generous support from foundations, organizations, and individual donations, Norfolk Botanical Garden is able to ensure the Garden remains accessible as a Garden for all.

Scan the QR code to learn more about the Day of Nature program and to support the Garden's mission to inspire through education and connection to nature.





Saguaro Cactus
Carnegiea gigantea
Cactaceae
Southwestern U.S.A.
2006.00019



Arid
House



Tropical
House



The Garden of **Tomorrow**

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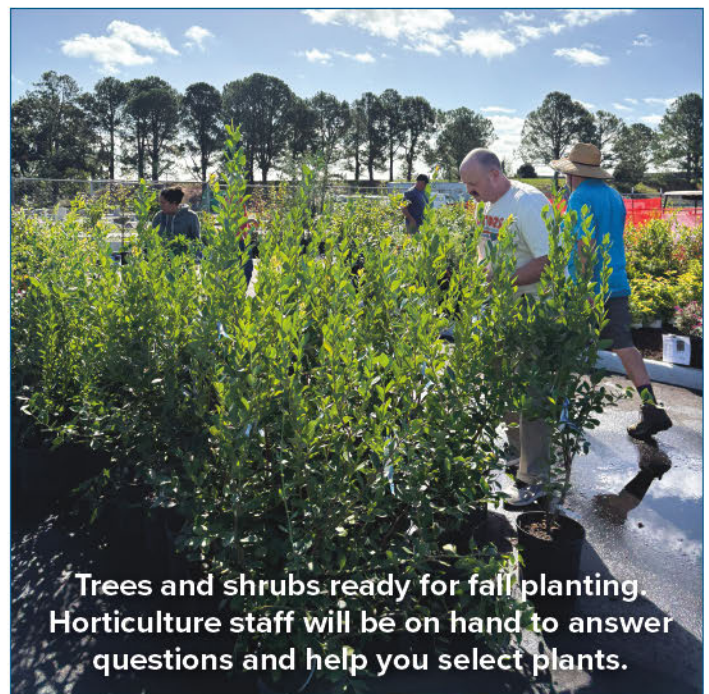
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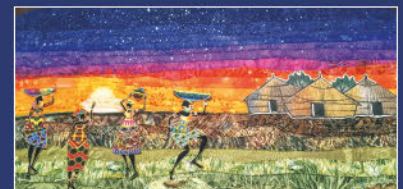


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Oct. 2– Dec. 30
Our Heritage in Threads
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