

NYBG/125

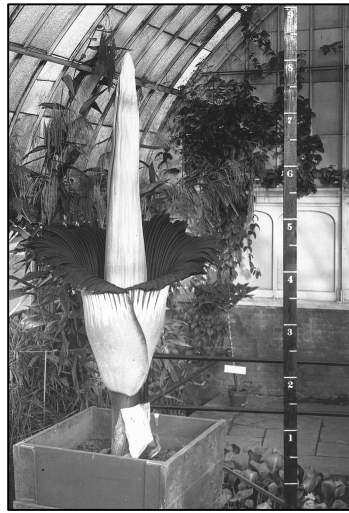
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Corpse Flower Blooms —and Releases Its Infamous Stench—at NYBG

Specimen of One of the Largest Flowers in the World That First Bloomed in the Western Hemisphere at NYBG in 1937, On Display in NYBG's Haupt Conservatory



The bud of the corpse flower on display at NYBG. Photographed on July 20, 2016.



The corpse flower blooming in 1937 at NYBG. Photo from the LuEsther T. Mertz Library.

Bronx, NY—After much anticipation, the corpse flower has finally bloomed at The New York Botanical Garden. Whenever the rare *Amorphophallus titanum* blooms, it causes a sensation. Perhaps it is because it is one of the largest flowers in the world and its blooming cycle is unpredictable, but more likely it is due to the infamous odor it releases during its brief 24–36-hour peak bloom—like the smell of rotting meat, the reason the plant is more popularly known as the corpse flower. Native to Sumatra in Indonesia, it first bloomed in the Western Hemisphere at The New York Botanical Garden in 1937, and after almost 80 years on Thursday, July 28, it has finally bloomed again at NYBG.

The bloom cycle occurs extremely quickly. NYBG horticulturists noticed the flower bud had formed on Friday, July 15, 2016. The corpse flower was moved on Monday, July 18, from NYBG's behind-the-scenes Nolen Greenhouses for Living Collections to the Enid A. Haupt Conservatory, where it is now on display in the *Palms of the World Gallery*, allowing visitors to experience this spectacular curiosity with their own senses.

Its strong, distinctive odor, which attracts pollinators that feed on dead animals, will be at its most pungent during its peak blooming. *Amorphophallus titanum* is the largest unbranched inflorescence (a cluster of flowers on a spike) in the plant kingdom, growing 12 feet tall in its natural habitat and about six to eight feet in cultivation. Although the enormous plant in bloom resembles one giant flower, it actually comprises a fleshy central spike called a spadix that holds two rings of male and female flowers, wrapped by the frilly spathe, a modified leaf that resembles a petal.

In the first several days of the bloom cycle, the bud grows about four to six inches per day. Then growth slows significantly. The two bracts at the base of the spathe shrivel and fall off. Next, the spathe, which was once tightly wound around the spadix, loosens and begins to open, revealing the deep-red color inside. During bloom, the spadix self-heats to approximately human body temperature, which helps disseminate odor particles. The spathe unfurls during the course of about 36 hours (full bloom) before withering and dying back. Generally the life cycle of the bloom is only one or two days.

A young corpse flower takes about seven to 10 years to store enough energy to begin its bloom cycle. This specimen was accessioned by The New York Botanical Garden in 2007 and has been carefully nurtured by horticulturists in the Nolen Greenhouses for nearly a decade. After the current cycle is complete, it will be several more years before this plant is ready to bloom again.

It has been almost 80 years since a specimen of this rare plant flowered at The New York Botanical Garden; its appearance this year marks another memorable event during NYBG's 125th Anniversary celebration. On June 8, 1937, the corpse flower bloomed for the first time in the Western Hemisphere here at NYBG. A second specimen bloomed at NYBG on July 2, 1939. Bronx Borough President James J. Lyons commemorated the event by designating *Amorphophallus titanum* as the official flower of the Bronx. (The Bronx's official flower was replaced by the daylily in 2000.)

Visitors can watch the corpse flower online via the Garden's live video feed at www.nybg.org/exhibitions/2016/corpse-flower.php or see and smell this rare plant first-hand during its limited time in the spotlight at NYBG by purchasing an *All-Garden Pass*, available at www.nybg.org.

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The New York Botanical Garden is a museum of plants located at Bronx River Parkway (Exit 7W) and Fordham Road. It is easy to reach by Metro-North Railroad or subway. The Garden is open year-round, Tuesday through Sunday and Monday federal holidays, from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. The best way to enjoy the Garden is with the *All-Garden Pass*, which includes admission to the grounds as well as to seasonal gardens, exhibitions, and attractions such as the Enid A. Haupt Conservatory, Everett Children's Adventure Garden, and Tram Tour. For ticket pricing, please check our Web site. For more information, please call 718.817.8700 or visit nybg.org

The New York Botanical Garden, 2900 Southern Boulevard, Bronx, New York 10458

The New York Botanical Garden is located on property owned in full by the City of New York, and its operation is made possible in part by public funds provided through the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs. A portion of the Garden's general operating funds is provided by The New York City Council and The New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation. The Bronx Borough President and Bronx elected representatives in the City Council and State Legislature provide leadership funding.

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