

THE NEW YORK BOTANICAL GARDEN

Fashionably Late: Spring Flowers and Foliage Are On the Way to The New York Botanical Garden

Three-Week Delay Won't Keep the Beauty Away



NEW YORK, April 6, 2015—Everyone in our area is well aware that climatologists have determined that this winter brought some of the coldest temperatures ever recorded in New York. The professional horticulturists who care for The New York Botanical Garden don't need official weather data to confirm suspicions that spring is coming later this year than it has in recent memory. Instead, all they need to do is walk through the Botanical Garden to see what magnolias, daffodils, then flowering cherries, and other spring-flowering favorites are doing at the moment. Gardeners' (and plants') internal clocks are set according to phenology—the timing of natural events such as flowering, fruiting, and leafing out—and all indications are that spring is overdue.

The staff members at NYBG, one of the world's great scientific and educational institutions, have access to a suite of resources to confirm (or deny) their suspicions. Since 2002, Volunteer Citizen Scientists have walked regularly through the Botanical Garden and noted carefully when certain plants are flowering, fruiting, leafing out, or dropping their leaves. The data from these "phenology walks" tell us that on average over the past decade, the native red maple—which is one of the most common street trees in New York and a favorite harbinger of spring—has been in peak flower around the middle of March. As of April 6, the flowers on the red maples in the Botanical Garden's Native Plant Garden and Thain Family Forest are just starting to open.

The red maples and decades of collective experience observing the plants in the Garden tell us that the normal progression of spring flowers—from magnolias, to daffodils, then cherries, crabapples, and so on—will be compressed and therefore April and early May will be even more spectacular than in a "normal" year. Temperatures in

February and March were extremely cold, but the thick layer of snow protected the plants. The absence of a winter thaw may have deprived us of some respite from the cold, but it also prevented tender plants such as Japanese flowering apricot from breaking dormancy early only to be zapped when winter returned. Notwithstanding a hard April frost, we expect this will be a fantastic year for flowers.

The past few relatively warm days have been enough to entice crocus, reticulate iris, glory-of-the-snow, and other early spring bulbs in the Rock Garden to open. The Garden-wide spectacle of magnolias and flowering cherries will soon follow.

“I invite everyone to stop by to experience the eruption of new life that makes spring at NYBG so magnificent,” says The New York Botanical Garden’s Arthur Ross Vice President for Horticulture and Living Collections Todd Forrest. “If you are fascinated by how the vagaries of climate change impact plants, you could volunteer as a Citizen Scientist at the Garden. To get involved, please call 718.817.8765.”

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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. Grounds-only admission is free all day on Wednesdays and from 9 to 10 a.m. on Saturdays. For more information, please call 718.817.8700 or visit nybg.org.

The New York Botanical Garden is located at 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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