

NYBG

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

An *Amorphophallus titanum*, One of the Largest Flowers in the World, Has Bloomed and Is on Display in NYBG's Haupt Conservatory for the Public to See (and Smell)



The corpse flower in bloom at NYBG, as seen on NYBG's livestream on the afternoon of June 27, 2019.

Bronx, NY— On the afternoon of June 27, 2019, a new corpse flower began to bloom at The New York Botanical Garden. Anyone who missed the last time an *Amorphophallus titanum* bloomed at NYBG now has a fleeting opportunity to witness this rare spectacle before its brief flowering cycle concludes. A new specimen of the horticultural marvel—one of the largest flowers in the world—is in bloom and on display in the Enid A. Haupt Conservatory, where part of NYBG's current exhibition, *Brazilian Modern: The Living Art of Roberto Burle Marx*, celebrating the influential Brazilian modernist artist, landscape architect, and plant explorer and conservationist, is mounted. Known as the corpse flower, this giant bloom releases an infamous odor, which some have described as similar to the smell of rotting meat, during its brief 24-to-36-hour peak bloom. The Haupt Conservatory will be open for extended hours on Friday, June 28 from 9 a.m.–8 p.m., complete with Corpse Flower Happy Hour on the Conservatory Plaza starting at 6 p.m. Visitors can enjoy cocktails and other refreshments for purchase. On Saturday, June 29, the Garden will open at 10 a.m. with extended evening viewing until 8 p.m. for Brazilian Modern After Hours with a chance to see the Roberto Burle

Marx exhibition and the corpse flower on display. With an *All-Garden Pass*, visitors can experience the blooming corpse flower with their own senses.

Although native to Sumatra, the corpse flower is a welcome addition to the other fascinating tropical plants in the Explorer's Garden component of the *Brazilian Modern* exhibition, which includes plants that were among Burle Marx's favorites and were often incorporated into the landscapes he designed. "If Roberto Burle Marx had a corpse flower, he would show it off," said Todd Forrest, NYBG's Arthur Ross Vice President for Horticulture and Living Collections. That is just what The New York Botanical Garden has done.

Its unpredictable blooming cycle and notorious stench are part of the plant's allure. Native to Sumatra in Indonesia, a corpse flower bloomed in the Western Hemisphere for the first time on June 8, 1937, here at The New York Botanical Garden. A second specimen bloomed at NYBG on July 2, 1939. At the time, Bronx Borough President James J. Lyons commemorated the event by designating the *Amorphophallus titanum* as the official flower of the Bronx (replaced by the daylily in 2000.) Almost 80 years later, a new specimen bloomed at NYBG on Thursday, July 28, 2016, creating a sensation as multitudes of people experienced some portion of the plant's life cycle in person or online. Then, on June 26, 2018, another corpse flower began to bloom at NYBG, once again attracting throngs of curious onlookers. Now, a new specimen a new specimen has bloomed and visitors have a chance to experience this curiosity again or for the first time.

The bloom cycle occurs extremely quickly. On May 15, 2019, NYBG horticulturists noticed a bud emerging from the soil in the corpse flower's container, but were uncertain whether it was a leaf or a flower bud. On June 17, they confirmed that it was a flower bud. The corpse flower was moved on Friday, June 21, the first day of summer, from NYBG's behind-the-scenes Nolen Greenhouses for Living Collections to the Enid A. Haupt Conservatory. It is now on view in the *Seasonal Exhibition Gallery*, which is currently displaying *Brazilian Modern's* Explorer's Garden, highlighting many tropical rain forest plants, allowing visitors to experience the development of this spectacular plant—from bud to flower—with their own senses.

Its strong, distinctive odor, which attracts pollinators that feed on carrion, will be at its most pungent during its peak blooming. The final opening of the bloom is unpredictable, but is expected to occur in the next week or two. *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 tall 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 is from the same small group of seedlings as the two previous corpse flowers that flowered at The New York Botanical Garden, a younger sibling that has been carefully nurtured for years by NYBG horticulturists in the Nolen Greenhouses. After the current cycle is complete, it will be several more years before this plant is ready to bloom again.

It is fitting that a new corpse flower has bloomed during NYBG's year-long #plantlove series of exhibitions, programs, and projects exploring the essential connections between plants, people, and the environment.

Visitors can watch the corpse flower online via the Garden's livestream at <http://www.nybg.org/corpseflowerlive> or see and smell this astonishing 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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