

What's Blooming?

October 2008

As you exit, please recycle this guide at our front door for the next visitor.

***Begonia grandis ssp. evansiana* (hardy begonia)**

This late summer bloomer has pendulant soft, rose-pink, translucent flowers that tumble gracefully downward against lovely triangular leaves. The leaves with their prominent red-veined undersides are especially showy, when backlit by late afternoon sun. Acclaimed by poets and painters beginning in the Ming dynasty, this plant has long been a symbol of feminine modesty, beauty and virtue. You'll find this plant under the osmanthus tree in the in the Courtyard of Tranquility and along the west wall by the Painted Boat in Misty Rain. **(Map A)**

***Pinellia tripartita* (voodoo lily, green dragon)**

While species of this genus are native to China, *P. tripartita* is an herbaceous perennial native to southern Japan. This diminutive Arum relative has attractive arrow- or heart-shaped leaves. Its oddly charming flower has a green, hooded spathe and extended, whiplike spadix. You'll find our specimen situated between two fragrant gardenias in the Courtyard of Tranquility. **(Map B)**

***Punica granatum 'Nana'* (pomegranate)**

This dwarf selection of pomegranate is grown in an enormous brown pot that can be found in the Courtyard of Tranquility, just south of the Hall of Brocade Clouds. Delicate, tissue paper-like petals burst out of thick, tubular, red-orange calyces. The fruit, with its abundant seeds, has long been a symbol of fertility among the Chinese. 'Nana' will produce the classic red fruit of commerce, but it is smaller and not customarily eaten. The pomegranate has been widely used in Chinese gardens since its arrival from the Middle East nearly 2,000 years ago—its native range is from Iran to the Himalayas in northern India. Contorted stems give this small tree an aged appearance making it a popular plant for 'penjing', the Chinese art of miniaturized landscape more commonly known as 'bonsai' in Japan. **(Map C)**

***Osmanthus heterophyllus 'Variegatus'* (variegated holly leaf osmanthus)**

This venerable tree presides over the Courtyard of Tranquility, located just inside the garden's entrance. Affectionately referred to as 'Old Gui,' it attests to the community spirit that helped our garden grow. This specimen was generously donated by a southeast Portland neighborhood where it was planted over one hundred years ago and is a rarity given its age and size. In autumn, Old Gui brings forth a crescendo of creamy white flowers so heavy with fragrance that passersby are compelled to linger in the streets beyond the garden wall. **(Map D)**

***Musa basjoo* (hardy fiber banana)**

Several stands of this atypically hardy banana are planted throughout the garden. It is used primarily for ornamental effect—its fruits are inedible—and will grow to a height of fifteen feet with arching leaf blades that may reach ten feet. Pale yellow flowers in summer are followed by small, green fruits of about 3" in length. Medieval Chinese poets praised the banana for the beauty of its long, undulating leaves and pendulous flowers. They were also captivated by the sound of wind and rain against its leaves; according to myth, as rain or "tear drops" roll across the surface of the leaf, they are transformed into pearls, a symbol of enlightenment in Buddhist thought. The banana is also an emblem of self-education. Lacking paper, impoverished students would practice calligraphy on its leaves instead. To spot flower and fruit, look up into the banana's tree-like canopy of exotic foliage

for a huge, drooping, dusty-gold flower pod. As with several other species of banana, the stems of *Musa basjoo* also provide fibers used in the manufacture of textiles. All parts of the plant have been harvested for use in traditional Chinese medicine. **(Map E)**

***Rosa chinensis* ‘Mutabilis’ (Chinese twelve month rose)**

Named for its tendency to bloom year around in temperate climates. This single flowering, bi-color rose bears loose, cup-shaped flowers which change from light yellow to peach and then to pink. *R. chinensis* ‘Mutabilis’ was used in the development of hybrid tea roses in England during the 19th century. Find specimens next to Knowing the Fish Pavilion and in the southeast corner of the entry plaza near the trio of granite arches. **(Map F)**

***Mahonia fortunei* (Fortune's mahonia)**

This Chinese relative of our native Oregon grape is just beginning to flower. Its bright yellow blooms are borne at the terminals of its branches and are contrasted by the soft matte green of its foliage. Reaching 7 feet tall, its multi-stemmed growth habit allows for regular pruning so that its flowers can be enjoyed at eye-level by our visitors. Pruning also induces new foliar growth which has an attractive burgundy color. **(Map G)**

***Firmiana simplex* (Chinese parasol tree)**

Towering over the east half of the garden, this quintessential Chinese tree can be found in nearly every scholar's garden. It is said to be the only tree that the mythical phoenix will land upon, and then only when a just ruler has brought peace to the land. Since it is planted near the study, the scholar would be gently reminded on a daily basis of the importance of getting his work done on time, as it's said to “shed one leaf a day until the land is locked in winter's embrace.” It has huge lime green leaves and smooth gray-green bark that contribute to its sublime beauty, only to be outdone by the unusual seed heads currently dangling from its branch tips. **(Map H)**

***Anemone* 'Prinz Heinrich'**

A. 'Prinz Heinrich' is a vigorous, semi-evergreen herbaceous perennial which spreads by creeping rhizomes. Semi-double, rose-pink flowers with golden yellow stamens rise up on wiry green stems from August through October. These dainty flowers with their trifoliate, slightly hairy leaves are a wonderful accompaniment at the base of large trees. Look towards the back of the Phoenix Rest for these charming plants. **(Map I)**

***Dichroa febrifuga* (evergreen hydrangea)**

This hydrangea-relative is evergreen and in late spring, produces a mophead of petite flower buds that open to tiny, star-shaped blooms in the most incandescent of blues. Flowering continues through the summer, and come fall, branches are weighted with pendulant clusters of tiny pink fruits that gradually segue into metallic blue bb's. **(Map J)**

***Tricyrtis* ‘Togen’ (toad lily)**

This is one of our favorites given its mid- to late summer bloom time. Flowers are lavender with yellow throats and dark purple spots. Visitors often compare them to orchids. Foliage is similar to false Solomon's seal with oblong, deeply veined leaves. Toad lily can be found at many locations in the garden, including stands in the Phoenix Rest and along the Garden's west wall just behind the gift shop next to the large, limestone boulder. **(Map K)**

***Kerria japonica* ‘Pleniflora’ (ditang flower)**

Native to China, this reliable spring and fall bloomer is as steady as the day is long with brilliant golden yellow flowers running the length of arching, bright green, cane-like branches. The double blooms of *K. japonica* ‘Pleniflora’ are dense and round. The Chinese have cultivated this popular

garden plant longer than anyone can remember. It is often found in older gardens in the Portland area as well. **(Map L)**

***Dichroa versicolor* (evergreen hydrangea)**

This hydrangea relative is semi-evergreen with dark green, deeply veined leaves. In late spring, large mopheads of petite buds open into masses of tiny, star-shaped blooms. In more acid soils, these flowers are the most incandescent of blues. Flowering continues through the summer. Come autumn, branches are weighted with pendulant clusters of miniature pink fruits that segue into metallic blue bb's by late winter. **(Map M)**

***Citrus ichangensis* (Ichang lemon)**

Hidden away under the two flowering plums on the east wall of the Scholar's Courtyard, the branches of this hardy citrus hang heavy with its green fruit. Sharp long spines ward off all but the most daring from its harvest. Its common name derives from its native range which includes the city of Yichang in China's Hubei province. Growing 5 to 8 feet tall, our specimen is reaching maturity. Historically the fruit has been used decoratively and for scenting rooms, as well as in the hybridization of hardier citrus varieties. This tree is the northernmost-growing Citrus and, along with the very hardy *Poncirus trifoliata*, is the hardiest of all citrus, surviving 6° F. **(Map N)**

***Hibiscus syriacus* (rose of sharon)**

The flowers of this deciduous member of the mallow family are alluring and plentiful. Our cultivars 'Minerva' and 'Aphrodite' grow at the east end of the Zig Zag Bridge in front of a large windmill palm. Trumpet-shaped blooms consist of slightly wrinkled lavender or pink petals with a deep red 'eye' in the center and last for little more than one day. Three-lobed leaves are coarsely toothed and occasionally used for tea in China. This Asian native came to the West via the Middle East, hence the reference to Syria in its name. **(Map O)**

***Rosa* 'Sevillana'**

Developed by the illustrious House of Meilland Roses in Le Luc En Provence, France, *Rosa* 'Sevillana' is one of the most maintenance free roses we've encountered. Although it aspires to be a large shrub, we keep it well-pruned given the space limitations of the garden. Regardless, it blooms profusely throughout the summer and fall adding a festive splash of red to the Garden. The Chinese landscape professionals who designed the Portland Classical Chinese Garden chose *Rosa* 'Sevillana' as a nod to Portland's own namesake—"The City of Roses." **(Map P)**

***Liriope* sp. (lily turf)**

Chinese gardeners sometimes call this lily family member the 'bordering everything grass' because they use it extensively to border pathways and also in masses beneath larger trees. A very durable evergreen, it is also artfully displayed in pots either alone or as an accent to a focal plant. In late summer and early fall lily turf produces numerous spikes of lavender flowers, creating subtle waves of color while much of the rest of the garden recedes with the arrival of autumn. Foliage consists of clumps of 12 to 18 inch grass-like leaves. Several cultivars of this Chinese garden standard, some with variegated leaves, are located in many places inside and outside the Garden. **(Map Q)**

***Nymphaea* sp. (water lily)**

Aquatic plants--most commonly, lilies and lotus--are an important part of a traditional Chinese garden. Water lilies have somewhat heart-shaped leaves that rest flat on the water's surface with their flowers floating complacently among them. A stunning red flowering cultivar can be enjoyed from the Knowing the Fish Pavilion, while white and pink varieties can be found throughout Lake Zither. **(Map R)**

***Nelumbo* sp. (lotus)**

Perhaps one of the most stirring sights for visitors to our Garden is the presence of lotus during the summer months. This water garden classic is actually quite hardy, weathering Portland area winters with ease. The enormous circular leaves of the lotus are held aloft and shed water like silvery beads of mercury. Immense flowers hover overhead revealing large, cone-shaped seed pods when petals fall away. The distinctive fragrance and grace of the lotus flower has inspired many generations of Chinese poets and artists. It is imbued with the notion of integrity, rising from the mud, traversing murky waters only to reveal an untainted, flawless bloom. **(Map S)**

***Lespedeza thunbergii* (bush clover)**

Arching slender branches clothed in blue-green leaves with silver accents are the perfect foil for soft purple, pea-like flowers. This vigorous shrub creates a fountain effect, as it cascades into the water from a small island located at the west end of the Zig Zag Bridge. A shore pine shares this lone bed, acting as an emerald green beacon visible from vantage points all along the water's edge. **(Map T)**

***Lagerstroemia indica* (crape myrtle)**

This Chinese native was a favorite ornamental tree during the Tang dynasty (618-906 AD) when it was a common sight on palace grounds in the capital. Its placement may reflect the symbolic association of *L. indica* with high governmental positions. As a garden plant, *L. indica* is admired for its dense clusters of crinkled blooms in white, pink, mauve, or purple. Its lengthy flowering cycle peaks during the height of summer heat and is honored by the Chinese common name 'One Hundred Days Red'. Mottled bark peels away from the smooth-as-silk trunk. Our specimens include the white-flowering 'Natchez' at the south end of the *Painted Boat in Misty Rain* and the red-flowering 'Tuscarora' due west of the *Hall of Brocade Clouds*. **(Map U)**

***Anemone* 'Honorine Jobert'**

While strolling along the walk at the west end of the garden be sure to stop and admire the white blooms of this herbaceous perennial lounging under the gnarled old *Magnolia* 'Ann'. An old garden hybrid discovered in Verdun, France in 1858, 'Honorine Jobert' produces its simple white blooms from August through October. **(Map V)**

***Lycoris radiata* (spider lily, red hurricane lily)**

Flowering briefly in August and September, *Lycoris radiata* is a truly striking sight. Rising a foot from the earth in a matter of days, the leafless stalks unfurl to produce a loose globe of 4 to 7 brilliant red flowers with long, curved, spidery stamens. This Chinese native is a member of the *Amaryllidaceae* family. A week or two after the flowers wither, basal leaves appear and remain through spring. **(Map W)**

Osmanthus x fortunei

This well-loved Chinese garden plant is used to scent tea and flavor wine. It is associated with legends about the moon because it blooms at the time of the Chinese 'mid-autumn' or 'moon' festival. Look for tiny, white flowers accented by spiny, dark-green leaves. **(Map X)**

***Corydalis* sp. 'Blackberry Wine'**

While not among plants traditionally found in Chinese gardens, this stunning herbaceous perennial makes an attractive groundcover in lightly shaded sites in our garden. As its name suggests, it has purple, narrowly tubular flowers of about an inch in length. Blue-green leaves are delicate and fernlike. Fragrant flowers appear in late spring and continue until mid-summer. After a short period of dormancy induced by the heat, flowers can be enjoyed again in autumn as temperatures cool. **(Map Y)**

***Belamcanda chinensis* (blackberry lily)**

This deciduous perennial is a lily family member with a very iris-like appearance. In bloom, this plant sports bright orange flowers accented by maroon spots. The seed capsules split in the fall to reveal clusters of shiny black seeds that resemble elongated black berries. Our best planting resides under the persimmon at the west end of the Hall of Brocade Clouds terrace. **(Map Z)**

***Osmanthus fragrans var. aurantiacus* (orange flowering sweet osmanthus)**

This well-loved Chinese garden plant is used to scent tea and flavor wine. It is associated with legends about the moon because it blooms at the time of the Chinese ‘mid-autumn’ or ‘moon’ festival. The variety *aurantiacus* is perhaps the most heavenly in terms of fragrance with tiny clusters of light orange flowers that make our mouths water with a scent reminiscent of warm apricots. **(Map 1)**

***Indigofera amblyantha* (Himalayan indigo)**

This deciduous shrub is native to the northwest Himalayas and produces a continuous flurry of pinkish-purple flowers from June through September. The blue-green leaves are composed of 13-21 tiny leaflets giving it that delicate, “sweet pea” appearance. Look for potted specimens at the base of the stairs on the Hall of Brocade Clouds terrace. **(Map 2)**

Outer Planting Beds:

***Oxalis crassipes* (vinegar juice plant, sorrel)**

A profusion of cheerful pink flowers rest on a bed of clover-like foliage, greeting visitors from under the shelter of a Japanese snowbell tree (*Styrax japonicum*). Although not a Chinese native, *Oxalis crassipes* is very much like sorrels grown in the gardens of China, evoking a similar aesthetic. The reference to vinegar in the common name for oxalis refers to the sour juice associated with many species belonging to this genus. **(Map 3)**

Nerium oleander

Even though it’s tucked behind the Hibiscus ‘Blushing Bride,’ it’s hard to miss the large, carmine red blooms on this beauty. Originally from the Middle East, this plant is known grown throughout China even in pots, this plant’s flowers have been used to adorn ladies hair, and the bark of its roots is used in traditional Chinese medicine. **(Map 4)**

***Miletia reticulata* (evergreen wisteria)**

Native to China, this vigorous, twining pea relative produces tight clusters of dark purple-red flowers with a fragrance of cedar or camphor in autumn. With shiny, leathery leaves resembling the Wisteria, to which it is closely allied, it is evergreen in frost-free locations or in the mildest winters in the Pacific Northwest; otherwise, it is semi-deciduous to deciduous. Commonly described in the literature as reaching approximately 15 feet, this vigorous vine is actually capable of growing far larger. **(Map 5)**

***Campsis grandiflora* (Chinese trumpet creeper)**

With flamboyant, rich orange to red trumpet-shaped flowers, *C. grandiflora* is aptly named for its immense and showy flowers which appear in July and continue for months through the summer and early autumn. This vigorous deciduous climber is native to China and clambers with long, twining branches along the wall in our outer, northeast bed. **(Map 6)**

As you leave, don’t forget to check our plant sale area at the Garden’s entrance. Your purchases support our Horticulture department and the continued care of our unique plant collection. Buy a plant today and bring a bit of China’s flora home!

Upcoming Horticultural Events:

Horticultural Tours – Tuesdays at 2:00 p.m. Take a stroll through the garden with Glin or Bill, our gardeners, and hear more about the Garden's world-class botanical collection.

Fall plant sale – October 25-26, 2008. The sale will include unusual edibles, fall favorites and year-end discounts. Our gardeners will also be on hand to talk about these fruiting, edible plants and how to best grow them in your own home garden.

For more details, visit www.portlandchinesegarden.org or call 503.228.8131.