The Brooklyn Botanical Garden

Institution Affiliation

Date

**Introduction**

Brooklyn Botanical Garden is an urban botanic garden in Mount Prospect Park at the heart of Brooklyn. While inspiring an appreciation and a sense of stewardship of the environment, the garden fosters delight and curiosity. It holds over fourteen thousand divergent plant taxa in a fifty-two-acre land. The garden includes a white cast-iron-and-glass aquatic plant house, the C. V. Starr Bonsai Museum housed in the Steinhardt Conservatory, three climate-themed plant pavilions, an art gallery, plant collections, and specialty " gardens inside the Garden."

**Japanese Tree Peonies (Paeonia Suffruticosa)**

The fascinating part of the garden was the Tree Peony Collection at Brooklyn Botanic Garden. It consists of forty-nine divergent varieties of tree peonies. I got to identify six different collection colors. I got some valuable insights about the plants. The tree peony is termed as the king of flowers in Asia since only China’s emperor was supposed to own them at one point in history. Usually, in the first week of May in New York City, the peony tree, an erect woody shrub, grows up to six feet. The Japanese tree peonies are not difficult to care for this popular with home gardens. I learned that the trees grow optimally on the full sun to partial shade, in well-drained soil. Its leaves are affected by powdery mildew, which is a fungal disease (Alexandria, 2018).

Rare cultivars and all six colors of tree peonies are represented in the garden. Examples of the flowers I got a glimpse of include; Paeonia suffruticosa, also known as ‘Shimane-chohjuraku', purple-lavender. Another flower is the Paeonia suffruticosa, also called ‘Tama Usagi', a pure white with double-flowered blossoms. There was also the Paeonia suffruticosa, also called ‘Shimanishiki' which is bright red with white stripes on the petals (interestingly, no two flowers have the same patterns). I also got the Paeonia suffruticosa, also known as 'Hatsugarasu', my favorite flower. It has a characteristic dark red color, therefore often referred to as "black." These are just a few intriguing examples of the cultivars I got a chance to see. The flowers have rare appearances compared to indigenous flowers.

**Native Flora Garden**

Another interesting site that caught my eye was the Native Flora Garden. I learned a surprising fact that the New York metropolitan area was a habitat of divergent plant communities. I knew that the wetlands were filled with beautiful orchids, rolling tall-grass prairie covered the eastern part of Long Island, cedar swamps and sphagnum bogs covered the New Jersey meadowlands, and much of Brooklyn was an oak forest. This fascinating botanical history gave me a different perspective of the ancient ecosystem and plant niches in the Garden (Alexandria, 2018). The Native Flora garden features one hundred and fifty native species, most of which are threatened by extinction, and was designed by Darrel Morrison.

A fascinating design that caught my eye is how the expanded garden featured a cultivated pine barren modeled after natural pines. Morrison is best known for prairie grass native designs. He describes his method to facilitate visitors to see divergent plant species in a small area and visualize nature transitions re-creations. The most exciting part about the Native Flora garden is that I passed woodland edges made of a grove of birches as the light and moisture continuum changed to give way when I moved from the existing wooded area. I felt it open into the sun-loving garden. There is a winding footpath where visitors walk through recreated Pine Barrens. Scrub oaks and pitch pines Pinus rigida line the upper Garden reach, which eventually converge into a small forest.

I got a glimpse of the Pixie-moss, which is a close to extinct evergreen groundcover. It was the favorite plant in the Native Flora Garden section because it was threatened by extinction and the Brooklyn Botanical Garden served as its custodian. Other plantings include sheep laurel and blueberry. The Native Flora Garden allowed me to connect with and learn about flowers when they are close to extinction.

**BBG’s Japanese Hill-and-Pond Garden**

Japanese Hill-and-Pond Garden is one of the extant gardens of Japanese descent established in a botanical garden in 1915. I learned that they used a Japanese stroll garden to develop the garden and incorporated additional historical styles. Interestingly enough, the park was designed to be explored on foot and from a distance (Lees, 2019). Shizen, a Japanese tradition of making a garden appear as though it has grown that way independently, was used to idealize the landscape. As I walked through the garden's winding paths, I saw the vistas, and before rounding a corner, I could hear the five-tiered waterfall. In this garden, as the plants evolve, they depict the four-season interest of the Japanese goal accomplished by structure and its color.

In this section, my favorite plant was the Japanese maple. These plants are beautiful all year round, especially during the fall when their foliage turns to gold and red shades. Azaleas and other evergreen plants are shaped into a dome to provide structure all year round. Due to their scenic pruning, the shrubs and trees hold snow expanding the garden's seasonal appeal. Additionally, I learned that New York anxiously waits for the first cherry blossoms in the Brooklyn Botanical Garden pond shore every spring. The cherry blossoms are usually the P. subhirtella ‘Pendula.' Visitors from all walks of life flock to the garden to celebrate hanami, an ancient tradition of viewing cherry blossoms. I also learned that the Cherrie tree blossoms weekly, but the process occurs for five weeks; therefore, individuals make multiple visits to envision the site.

**Cherry Esplanade**

Allees of flowering red oak and cherries spur bordering a broad green lawn, is the characteristic appearance of the cherry esplanade. At the end of April, the double-flowered ‘Kanzan’ cherries bloom. During my visit, I observed the blossoming of the cherries in the Garden’s Cherry Walk. I also learned that behind the Japanese Hill-and-Pond Garden is a meandering path, the Cherry walk, east of the Cherry Esplanade. In the southern end, a wide variety of cultivars and double rows of ‘kanzan' cherries constitute the trees in the garden, some of which are the earliest to bloom in the cherry season. Allees of scarlet oak trees, the Liberty oaks grace the eastern and western edges of the Cherry Esplanade. The hamani, a centuries-old Japanese tradition of flower viewing, is done in the cherry blossom season, which is a month-long. I also learned that the blossoms represent the impermanence of life, and therefore they are cherished for their ephemeral nature (BBG website).

**Conclusion**

In summary, the Brooklyn Botanical Garden’s main highlight that I got a glimpse of was the Japanese Hill-and-Pond Garden graced with Japanese maples and wooden bridges. The garden has an extensive collection of thirteen gardens and five conservatories with plenty of scenic views to soak up. Some of my favorite plants included Japanese maples, 'kanzan' cherries, pixie-moss, and tree peonies during the visit.

References

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