

# City of Stars



If you think New York is all about concrete and steel, think again. Our spring is actually an anthophile's paradise.

By *Sonia Weiser*

All the signs are saying that spring is finally here. The last of the snow has melted; the trees lining the sidewalks are slowly regaining color on their branches; New Yorkers are reemerging from their heated apartments without multiple layers of outerwear; and there's nary a lost mitten in sight. Now that nature has given us the go-ahead, flower-related activities are popping up all over the calendar, bringing you blossomy fun appropriate for any occasion and audience.

For starters, a trip to the New York Botanical Garden, in the Bronx, is most definitely worth the effort. You can catch the tail end of the garden's 15th year of presenting stunning orchids in "The Orchid Show: Thailand" (thru April 9). Thailand today is the biggest exporter of tropical orchids in the world, and this exhibit takes full advantage of that fact, with displays

of elephant topiaries, walkways and lush gardens planted and filled with Vanda, Dendrobium and Paphiopedilum orchids, all dazzling in color and design. Also this month: Integrating natural beauty with artistic mastery, the New York Botanical Garden's Dale Chihuly exhibit features glass work and drawings from Chihuly's multidecade career as a glass artist, including new pieces and modern interpretations of his older creations. Beginning on April 22 and running through the fall, the exhibit also ushers in a variety of events for kids and adults alike to interact with and be inspired by Chihuly's visions. Join the NYBG on the 22nd and 23rd for the opening weekend of its Earth Day Celebration, or attend "Chihuly Nights," a weekly opportunity for visitors to enjoy the installations accompanied by live music, food and specialty cocktails.

Elsewhere in the Bronx, Wave Hill, the

PHOTO: DALE CHIHULY, "SAPPHIRE STAR," 2016, ATLANTA BOTANICAL GARDEN

## *The Mall and Literary Walk in Central Park, flanked by American elm trees, is where parts of "Kramer vs. Kramer" were filmed.*

28-acre public garden, has flowers aplenty as well as guided walks on Saturdays, Sundays and Tuesdays, and programming throughout the year. This April, visit the garden for Arbor Weekend from the 28th through the 30th for family-friendly activities and demonstrations, and look out for seasonal floral favorites like lilacs, azaleas and Virginia bluebells. From 10 am to 4 pm, find fresh, locally sourced snacks and meals at The Café, including vegetarian, vegan and gluten-free options. If you're craving something extra-refined, make reservations for afternoon tea on Tuesdays through Fridays at 2 and 2:30 pm.

If Brooklyn is more your thing, you can celebrate the cherry blossom season at Brooklyn Botanic Garden's Sakura Matsuri, April 29–30. Immerse yourself in new and traditional Japanese dance, music, food and art through performances, workshops and other interactive events. Before you leave, pay a visit to the other plants in bloom throughout the campus' many gardens, such as tulips, marigolds and daffodils, and pick up a souvenir at the Garden Shop. If you can't make it to the weekend's festivities, BBG is open weekly from Tuesday through Sunday.

The Theater District—and more specifically, Times Square—isn't known for its flora, but this month, that's all going to change as "Sound of Ikebana (Spring)" takes over the electronic billboards in Midtown. Created by artist and Japan Cultural Envoy 2016, Naoko Tosa, the video, filmed at 2,000 frames per second, captures the organic movement of liquid paints as they're manipulated through sound vibration. The expressive display of merging colors and textures is a modern translation of the Japanese art of floral arranging (ikebana) and while that may be hard to imagine, the resemblance is nothing short of magnificent. Make sure to stop and admire before or after a Broadway show—or

go to check it out on its own.

Even longtime New Yorkers will tell you that Central Park in the springtime never gets old. If an afternoon away from honking cars and massive crowds of office workers strikes your fancy, stroll along all (or some) of the 58 miles of tree-lined pathways through the gardens and breathe in the fresh air. While you're at it, pay a visit to the cherry blossoms on the east side of the Reservoir, the tulips and spiraea at East 90th Street, or the redbuds spanning West 86th Street to West 90th. If that's not enough, check out the Central Park website's Bloom Guide, which lists all of the Park's seasonal beauties and their locations. And if you're a film buff, stop by the quickly-turning-green Sheep Meadow, where parts of "Wall Street" were filmed; the 40-foot-wide Mall and Literary Walk, flanked by rows of American elm trees, where a young Justin Henry ran from Dustin Hoffman into the arms of his estranged mother, Meryl Streep, in "Kramer vs. Kramer;" and Central Park's Bow Bridge, where Peter Parker courted Mary Jane Watson with a bouquet of flowers in "Spider-Man 3."

Whether it's your first time visiting the High Line, or walking on the elevated park is another part of your New York routine when in town, there's always something new to discover along this West Side oasis. The well-curated gardens are full of flowers, shrubs and trees like hyacinths, saffras and wild geraniums. Unexpected species pop up to delight, like a gorgeous growth called Vintage Wine coneflowers, adding vibrancy to the old freight rails. For a better understanding of everything the High Line has to discover, join a free tour and learn more about the park's history and design or just sit on one of the many benches, watch all the people go by and see if you can spot some spectacular new wildflower. You never know what you might see.



### **A BLOSSOMING TOWN**

*Facing page:* Dale Chihuly's "Sapphire Star" at the New York Botanical Garden. *This page, from top:* A visitor smells cherry blossoms at the Brooklyn Botanic Garden; Virginia bluebells at Wave Hill; a row of coneflowers on the High Line.