

April in the Garden

April is a lush month in the garden. The plants are putting on new growth and the fresh young leaves all but glow. The air is soft and smells so good. As you come onto the entrance boardwalk, a flash of pink near the pagoda will catch your eye. *Magnolia sargentiana* var. *robusta* is on one side and the deeper pink of *Magnolia sprengeri* ‘Eric Savill’ is on the other.

April is one of the loveliest months in the Asian Garden. It is at its peak of bloom with many rhododendrons, camellias and magnolias vying for your attention. As you look from the boardwalk across the pond, *Clematis armandii* is at its most beautiful, climbing up a tall, second-growth *Thuja plicata* (Western red cedar) and spilling over onto the *Rehderodendron macrocarpum* that will bloom in May. Along the main path on your left, the very elegant white-flowered *Magnolia zenii* is in flower, and farther on, the mauves and purples of *Rhododendron augustinii* and *R. concinnum* (Pseudoyanthinum Group) will certainly catch your eye. If you look through the trees on the right you will spot the large white flowers of *Magnolia campbellii* ‘Ethel Hillier’. There are many more magnolias blooming this month, but don’t miss *M. sprengeri* var. *diva* ‘Claret Cup’ in the meadow and *M. campbellii* subsp. *mollicomata* along the wheelchair path.

Of the many early perennials in bloom, the patch of rose-coloured *Primula juliae* makes a very bold statement despite its diminutive height of 7.5 cm. Other include *P. veris* (yellow-flowered cowslip primrose), the purple flowers of *P. sieboldii* and, my favourite, *P. elatior* subsp. *meyeri*, in its rare white form with a pale yellow eye. Look for *Epimedium*, the bright yellow *Doronicum*, the pale mauve of *Veronica gentianooides*, the bold leaves of *Rodgersia* and *Tellima grandiflora* growing with *Dicentra formosa* (pink-flowered bleeding heart), both native to British Columbia. There are so many plants in bloom, but you must look near the *Acer griseum* (paperbark maple) on the lower bark mulch path where the bright pink bud masses of *Staphylea holocarpa* var. *rosea* will soon open into dainty pink flowers. The Asian Garden is also the home of some lovely uncommon camellias, including *Camellia forrestii*, *C. reticulata*, *C.*

yunnanense and the dainty-flowered *C. transnokoensis*. All are white except for *C. reticulata* with its bright pink blossoms.

Although the Alpine Garden will be at its peak in May, April provides its own spectacle. A prime spot is under and near the *Corylus avellana* ‘Contorta’ (contorted hazel) in the European section, where you will find the yellow flowers of *Doronicum* (leopard’s bane), which has species native to both Europe and Asia. You will see patches of pink and white *Anemone* (windflowers), *Muscari* (grape hyacinth) and daffodils, including the small-flowered *Narcissus cyclamineus*, *N. bulbocodium* (petticoat narcissus) and *N. rupicola*. Look for the soft hairs on the stem and calyx of *Pulsatilla vulgaris* (pasque flower), whose colours vary from soft shades of purple and mauve to white, and even a soft pink and red.

In the South American section by the fence, you will see the soft yellow flowers of *Anemone multifida*. Don’t miss the barberries, which are in flower near the anemone. *Berberis darwinii* has bright orange yellow flowers, and there is a *B. darwinii* cross next to it with yellow flowers, *B. × stenophylla* ‘Irwinii’.

The trilliums are in bloom in the North American section. *Trillium chloropetalum* grows from Washington to central California, *T. ovatum* occurs from BC to central California and *T. sessile* is found as far east as eastern Nevada.

Iberis gibraltaria, a pale mauve South African candytuft, flowers near the gravel road at the foot of the Alpine Garden. Also from Africa is an eye-catching bright red legume known commonly as kidney vetch or lady’s fingers, *Anthyllis vulneraria* subsp. *iberica*.

Garden visitors have much to enjoy throughout the year, but April is a particularly enjoyable month.