



PRESS RELEASE
For immediate release

THE BOTANICAL GARDEN GREENHOUSES ARE FULL OF SURPRISES!

Montréal, November 19, 2009 – Montréal's Nature Museums invite you to come admire the botanical splendours in the greenhouses at the Botanical Garden. Check out some surprising blooms, fast growers, unique fragrances and gorgeous colours, Tuesday to Sunday, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Botanical giants

A **tree dahlia** (*Dahlia imperialis*), on display for just a few more days, reached **3.5 metres** in a single season. Its tall, hollow, jointed stems resemble bamboo and bear numerous long, doubly divided leaves. The “emperor” is crowned with capitula of single flowers with mauve petals and yellow centres. *On display in the Reception Centre at the Botanical Garden.*

All the parts of the **elephant foot yam** (*Amorphophallus paeoniifolius* var. *campanulatus*) are truly enormous! First, a huge tuber produces a gigantic flower with an odour that attracts pollinating insects. Then it sends up a divided, umbrella-like leaf on a two-metre long marbled stalk. *On display in the Orchids and Aroids Greenhouse.*

Bromeliads in bloom are really something to see. The floral stalk of a **Hohenbergia** (*Hohenbergia stellata*) can reach 1.2 m, and it can bloom for more than three months. There is another specimen in the greenhouse whose stalk has turned from **red to white** after one year. *On display in the Tropical Rainforest Greenhouse.*

An agave plant, **Mauritius hemp** (*Furcraea foetida*) has finally begun blooming. The many star-shaped flowers, about 5 to 7 cm across, will bloom **for the first and last time**, over a period of several weeks. Once it has finished flowering, the plant will gradually die back, as is the case for most members of this family. *On display in the Arid Regions Greenhouse.*



Credit : Gilles Murray



Credit : Gilles Murray



Credit : Michel Tremblay

Some highly unusual plants

The iridescence of the **blue strap fern** (*Microsorium thailandicum*), a member of the Polypodiaceae family, is a rare phenomenon in plants. It is thought to be due to the presence inside the leaves of thin layers of cells whose thickness or shape reflects certain wavelengths of light. This explains the **iridescent metallic bluish-green sheen** on the fronds of this fern. *On display in the Ferns Greenhouse.*



Credit : Michel tremblay

When the spores of one of the **staghorn ferns** dispersed, they germinated at the base of the “trunk” of a tree fern. Just as would happen in the wild, they produced a young *Platycterium* plant. It was a treat for the horticulturist, who had never seen this happen before. *On display in the Ferns Greenhouse*



Credit : Michel tremblay

An **insect-eating tropical pitcher plant** (*Nepenthes ventricosa*) prefers moist conditions, and grows in poor, acidic soil. To make up for the lack of soil nutrients, it traps insects and small animals in its reddish “pitchers.” The victims are attracted by the colour and the intoxicating scent of its nectar, and perch on the edge ... before sliding down into a pool of digestive fluids. *On display in the Molson Hospitality Greenhouse.*



Credit : Gilles Murray

A **corytoplectus** (*Corytoplectus capitatus*) is one of the rare representatives of the shrub form of Gesneriads, the same family as African violets. Its large, rough, forest green leaves are **covered with** downward-facing **hairs** that help shed the abundant water in its natural surroundings. It has a dense umbel of small, tubular yellow flowers, ringed by reddish sepals in the shape of upside-down sacs. *On display in the Begonias and Gesneriads Greenhouse.*



Credit : Lise Servant

Stunning beauties

A **Cattlianthe** (*Cattlianthe Portia* grex ‘Gloriosa’) is an orchid with fabulous blooms and a **heady fragrance**. This isn’t the only plant that delights visitors, though. You can admire — and inhale — the charms of the lovely *Lycaste*, *Guarianthe*, *Oncidium* and several other species of *Cattleya* orchids displayed in this greenhouse. *On display in the Orchids and Aroids Greenhouse.*



Credit : Michel tremblay

A **Begonia brevirimosa** is a large shrub begonia that makes a statement with its unusual **metallic pink and dark green marbled leaves with dull red undersides**. These unique colours help it capture as much sunlight as possible in the shady, moist undergrowth of New Guinea, where it grows in the wild. *On display in the Begonias and Gesneriads Greenhouse.*



Credit : Gilles Murray

False holly (*Osmanthus heterophyllus*), with leaves almost identical to those of a real holly plant, has **highly scented flowers**. They have a stronger, spicier fragrance than sweet osmanthus (*O. fragrans*), with its more delicate, fruity scent. *On display in the Garden of Weedlessness (penjing) Greenhouse.*

Fruity surprises

This is the first time ever that a **jackfruit** has ripened at the Botanical Garden. The tree (*Artocarpus heterophyllus*) has often produced small fruit in the past, but they all fell off quickly. In the wild, they can reach 80 cm and weigh up to 30 kg! Although they have a nauseating smell when fully ripe, the young fruit are cooked in coconut milk and spices to make *nasi gudeg*, a traditional Indonesian dish. *On display in the Tropical Food Plants Greenhouse.*



Credit : Lise Servant

Banana plants are native to Southeast Asia, and are now grown in over 130 tropical countries. Along with plantains, eaten as vegetables, bananas are a staple food in many countries. A banana (*Musa* 'Gran Enano') is a herbaceous plant, the "trunk" of which is actually a stem formed of tightly overlapping leaf stalks. Each plant produces a single crop of bananas, 12 to 15 months after planting. *On display in the Tropical Food Plants Greenhouse.*



Credit : Michel tremblay

A colourful show

A **guzmania** (*Guzmania sanguinea*) is completely transformed when it blooms. The normally green middle leaves turn red and yellow. In the wild, this temporary change in pigmentation attracts birds to pollinate the flowers. Once the plant has finished blooming, the leaves turn back to green – until the next time. This metamorphosis occurs three to four times a year. *On display in the Tropical Rainforest Greenhouse.*



Credit : Gilles Murray

The **aloe** plants put on quite a show when they bloom in November. Their yellow, orange and red flowers, grouped in racemes, last for several weeks. Unlike the agaves they resemble, aloes do not die back after flowering. In some parts of Africa, where they originate, the flowers of many aloe species are used in cooking. *On display in the Arid Regions Greenhouse.*



Credit : Gilles Murray

The exhibition greenhouses are open Tuesday to Sunday, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Montréal's Nature Museums – the Biodôme, Insectarium, Botanical Garden and Planetarium – helping people enjoy nature to the fullest.

– 30 –

Information:

Karine Jalbert, Communications Co-ordinator
Telephone: 514 872-1453
E-mail: karinejalbert@ville.montreal.qc.ca

François Ouellet, Marketing Representative
Telephone: 514 872-3232
E-mail: fouellet_2@ville.montreal.qc.ca

Visual available on request