China is home to more than 30,000 plant species – one-eighth of the world’s total. At Lan Su, visitors can enjoy hundreds of these plants, many of which have a rich symbolic and cultural history in China. This guide is a selected look at some of Lan Su’s current favorites.
A master species list is available at the entrance. It is also available online at www.lansugarden.org/plants.
BEGONIA  (Begonia grandis ssp. evansiana)
Along with pendulant, rose-pink flowers, this plant has prominent red veins on the undersides of its leaves. Native to China, it has been admired by poets and painters since the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644 CE) as a symbol of feminine modesty, beauty and virtue.

POMEGRANATE  (Punica granatum)
Though originating in the Middle East, pomegranate has been cultivated in China since the 3rd Century BCE. The autumn fruit symbolizes fertility. Easily grows in Portland in a protected sunny locations.

OSMANTHUS  (multiple species, see master species list)
Osmanthus are evergreen trees or shrubs with tiny intensely fragrant flowers. Their common name is 'sweet olive' due to their sweet fragrance, and fruits which resemble olives (though toxic). Our collection includes several species and cultivars with different habits, leaf shapes, and flower colors (white, yellow, or orange). Native to China, osmanthus is associated with legends about the moon because they bloom at the time of the Chinese 'mid-autumn' or 'moon festival.'

WEEPING KATSURA  (Cercidiphyllum japonicum)
This deciduous small tree has weeping branches of heart-shaped leaves. Come fall, its leaves turn an orange-brown and smell like burnt sugar.

ROSE  (Rosa 'Sevillana')
While not native to China, Rosa 'Sevillana' with its bright red blooms was selected by the original designer as a nod to Portland's own namesake—"The City of Roses."

LOQUAT  (Eriobotrya japonica)
This rose-family tree is native to south-central China. It has large, serrated deep green leaves and flowers late in the fall. In mild winters, it may produce a small yellow edible fruit.

SHORE PINE  (Pinus contorta)
Although this species is not native to China, pines are an important design element of a Chinese garden and a traditional symbol of strength. Each of the garden's shore pines has different growth habits typical of the species and years of pruning.

CRAB MyRTLE  (Lagerstroemia 'Natchez' & 'Tuscarora')
This Chinese native was a favorite ornamental tree during the Tang dynasty (618-906 CE), when it was a common sight on palace grounds. Look up high for its dense clusters of crinkled blooms and below for its mottled, peeling bark.
JAPANESE WHITE PINE  
(*Pinus parviflora*)

The pine has long been revered by the Chinese as a symbol of longevity. This five-needled pine has foliage with a distinctive white stripe and bluish hue. Its graceful branch pattern and evergreen foliage are something to admire in the cold, winter months.

SEVEN SONS FLOWER  
(*Heptacodium miconoides*)

Native to China, this late summer bloomer has fragrant white flowers followed by rose-pink calyces. This multi-stemmed shrub has a fountain shape and interesting, exfoliating bark.

CHINESE FRINGE FLOWER  
(*Loropetalum chinense*)

Native to China, this evergreen shrub is a witch hazel family member. Strappy, bright pink flowers arrive in a flurry in April and continue sporadically through summer and fall.

CRABAPPLE  
(*Malus ‘Prairiefire’, Malus ‘Sugar Tyme’*)

Crabapples have fragrant flowers in the spring and plentiful edible fruits summer thru winter. ‘Sugar Tyme’ has white flowers and bright green leaves and fruits, while ‘Prairiefire’ has pink flowers and dark green leaves and burgundy fruits.

For several years, the roots of Prairiefire crabapple has hosted an interesting fungus, *Hydnellum peckii*, or bleeding tooth fungus. It’s a mycorrhizal fungus, forming a mutually beneficial relationship with the host plants roots.

CITRUS  
(*Citrus ichangensis, Citrus trifoliata ‘Flying Dragon’ [Formerly Poncirus trifoliata]*)

Citrus  *ichangensis* and Citrus trifoliata are both native to China and in the Rutaceae (citrus) family. The fruits are edible but very acidic, used in marmalades and zest, and used to perfume rooms. Poncirus trifoliata ‘Flying Dragon’ is a dwarf cultivar with highly contorted stems and long sharp spines, it is the only deciduous citrus and is commonly used as rootstock for other citrus varieties due to its cold tolerance and disease resistance.

LACEBARK PINE  
(*Pinus bungeana*)

Native to China, mature specimens of this species are rarely found in the United States. It often grows as a multi trunk tree with needles in bundles of three. Its most outstanding ornamental quality is its multi-colored bark that naturally flakes off in a lace-like pattern.

PERSIMMON  
(*Diospyros kaki ‘Hachiya’*)

Cultivated for more than 2,000 years in China, this ebony-wood family member grows to 20 feet tall and is hardy to 10° F. Its fruit turns a bright orange as the leaves begin to drop. The highly tannic fruit can only be eaten after it ripens to a mushy softness.

BAMBOO  
(multiple species, see master species list)

Bamboo is admired in China for its flexible nature and ability to return to its upright position after challenging circumstances, or bend without breaking. It has many uses, from food to medicine to building material, and more. Bamboo is in the Poaceae, or grass, family. It flowers after 60-90 years depending on species, and then dies.

Do you have a question about a specific plant? Email Lan Su’s Horticulture department at info@lansugarden.org for more information.