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
GARDENIA
(Gardenia ‘Kleims Hardy’)
Native to China, the gardenia is one of the Garden's most fragrant plants. These evergreen shrubs with creamy white, star-shaped flowers will survive our winters, if protected.

ROSE
(Rosa chinensis ‘Mutabilis’, Rosa ‘Sevillana’)
Rosa chinensis ‘Mutabilis’ is a repeat-bloomer with flowers that change from pale yellow to peach then pink. It was used in the development of hybrid tea roses in England in the 19th century. 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.”

MAGNOLIA
(Magnolia delavayi, M. grandiflora)
China is home to more magnolia species than any other country in the world. The garden’s summer-blooming species include M. delavayi and M. grandiflora. Both produce large white, fragrant blooms. While not native to China, M. grandiflora has been used in gardens in China for over 300 years.

CHINESE MAYAPPLE
(Podophyllum pleianthum)
This herbaceous perennial has huge waxy leaves with tassels of maroon flowers dangling below. The flowers have an unpleasant smell which is attractive to flies, the plant’s pollinator.

ORCHID
(Bletilla striata)
This terrestrial orchid is very easy to grow in the Portland area. Native to China, Japan, and Korea, its pleated leaves are accented with delicate white or lavender flowers.

MONDO GRASS
(Ophiopogon japonicus ‘Nanus’)
Native to China, this grass-like plant is used throughout the garden as a groundcover. A member of the lily family, it is slow-growing but very durable.

BANANA
(Musa basjoo)
Native to China, this cold-hardy species is used for ornamental effect, as its tiny, green fruits are inedible. All parts of the plant are used in traditional Chinese medicine and fibers from the stem can be used to make textiles.

CHINESE FRINGE FLOWER
(Loropetalum chinensis)
This evergreen shrub is in the witch hazel family. Lan Su has several purple-leaved specimens whose magenta flowers provide bright color in spring and summer.
LILY TURF
(Liriope muscari, L. spicata)
This lily family member is a durable evergreen with grass-like leaves which produces numerous spikes of lavender flowers in summer. Used in gardens in China as a border or in mass plantings.

CRAPE 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 in late summer and below for its mottled, peeling bark.

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