Plant Guide

Spring

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 Katsura
B Chinese Paper Bush
C Winter Daphne
D Chinese Fringe Flower
E Forsythia
F Camellia*
G Magnolia*
H Lushan Honeysuckle
I Peony*
J Chinese Primrose
K Quince
L Crabapple
M Rhododendron*
N Barrenwort
O Kerria
P Bergenia
Q Chinese Mayapple
R Orchid
KATSURA  
(Cercidiphyllum japonicum ‘Pendula’)
This unusual weeping variety of Katsura is a showstopper year round with its ethereal beauty. Rarely found in Chinese Gardens, the leaves begin to emerge in March opening fully to heart shaped green golden leaves on graceful branches. Come back in the early Autumn for its sweetly scented golden leaves.

CHINESE PAPER BUSH  
(Edgeworthia ‘Akebono,’ E. chrysantha)
Native to China, this deciduous shrub is a relative of sweet daphne. In winter, frosty silver buds open to clusters of intoxicatingly fragrant, golden-yellow or orange flowers. The Chinese made paper from this plant by pounding flat the stems and bark.

WINTER DAPHNE  
(Daphne ‘Aureomarginata,’ D. odora)
This evergreen shrub explodes with clusters of pink flowers in winter that have a rich, orange blossom-like scent. The original Chinese name for this plant is “sleeping scent”. Legend has it that a monk fell asleep beneath the cliffs of the ancient Lu Mountain. There he dreamt of an impossibly sweet fragrance, only to awake and find himself next to this sweetly fragrant plant.

CHINESE FRINGE FLOWER  
(Loropetalum chinense, Loropetalum ‘Snow Dance’) 
This deciduous shrub is in the witch hazel family. Lan Su has several purple-leaved specimens whose magenta flowers provide bright color in spring and summer. An additional green-leaved specimen with white flowers sits along the pond edge in front of the teahouse.

FORSYTHIA  
(Forsythia x intermedia ‘Lynwood Gold’)
Long cultivated in Chinese gardens, forsythia has become popular in gardens throughout the world. Cut branches can be forced to bloom early, when brought indoors.

CAMELLIA  
(Camellia, japonica ‘Drama Girl’) For additional camellia varieties, see the Master Species List
The camellia has long been a favorite garden plant in China. The ornamental species frequently used in traditional Chinese gardens were C. japonica, C. reticulata and C. sasanqua. The Chinese were cultivating camellias at least as early as 495 B.C.E.

MAGNOLIA  
(Magnolia x soulangiana) For additional magnolia varieties, see the Master Species List
China is home to more magnolia species than any other country. Certain species have been cultivated for well over a thousand years. Look for their white, pink and yellow blooms on bare branches throughout the garden.

LUSHAN HONEYSUCKLE  
(Lonicera modesta var. lushanensis)
This deciduous to semi-evergreen shrub produces tubular white flowers that run the length of vigorous, vine-like branches during winter. Its sweet and fresh fragrance can be detected even on cold, rainy spring days.
Flowering Quince have long been grown in Chinese gardens and are also used in penjing, Chinese miniature potted landscapes.

Rhododendron (Rhododendron oreotrephes) For additional Rhododendron varieties, see the Master Species List

The Chinese common name of the azalea, a Rhododendron species, is dujuan and is associated with the cuckoo bird. Ancient poems link the bird’s seasonal singing with the its spring bloom time. Other Rhododendron species weren’t typically used in classical Chinese gardens, but are displayed here to represent the vast number of species found in China.

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