Focus on ORCHIDS

Botanical Garden show has orchids climbing the walls

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This year's orchid show at the New York Botanical Garden brings a whole new meaning to the term wallflower. The 10th annual event's theme this year is vertical gardens — composed of upright walls covered in orchids, ferns and other lush foliage.

Designed by French botanist and artist Patrick Blanc, who draws inspiration from plants that grow skyward in their natural environments, the exhibition features thousands of orchids in hues ranging from pure white and light yellow to deep, velvety purple. There are even tiny eggplant-colored blooms that smell like chocolate.

Mr. Blanc has built green walls across the world, including in Hong Kong, Paris, Taiwan and now the Bronx. His blueprints for the NYBG exhibition are exhibited along with the flowers.

"This is very special ... doing green walls is a totally new way of looking at plants," docent Joyce Newman said as attendees around her snapped pictures and exclaimed over the fragrant blooms.

The centerpiece of the exhibit, which will run through Sunday, April 22, is a large wall in the entrance of the Enid A. Haupt Conservatory that appears to float above a reflecting pool. The wall is covered in bands of purple and white orchids and is illuminated by the glass dome above. NYBG gardeners built the wall by attaching chicken wire and cutting holes for the plants to peek through, according to a docent.

In the hallway of the conservatory, an archway covered in the featured flowers leads to three more walls, each with a different color scheme.

"Oh gorgeous," one attendee said as she looked at the walls.

"Just beautiful," another agreed.

The walls feature cane orchids, known for their large size, diversity and adaptability; tree dwellers, which grow high on other plants; and moth orchids, which are the most common type found in homes.

The show will run through Sunday, April 22, in New York Botanical Garden's Enid A. Haupt Conservatory, located at 2900 Southern Boulevard.

The garden is closed on Mondays but is open Tuesday through Sunday, from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Admission costs $20 for adults, $18 for students and seniors and $8 for children aged 2 to 12. Children 2 and under and members are free.

The show also includes orchid evenings, which feature cocktails and music, on select Saturdays and Fridays. Admission costs $30 for non-members and $20 for members.

For more information, go to www.nybg.org.

Photos by Marist Diaz
NYBG member Susan Lennon takes a close look at a wall filled with orchids and Medinilla flowers.

FLOWERS ON DISPLAY at the New York Botanical Garden include, clockwise from top left, Asian Corsage orchids; Moth orchids, or Phalaenopsis; Pansy orchids, or Miltoniopsis; Dortaenopsis Beauty Shee na 'Ran Ran' orchids; Phalaenopsis; Baldan's Kaleidoscope 'Golden Treasure' orchids; Memoria Sabrina Mark orchid, though not an orchid, Medinilla, a tropical flower, is a show stopper for its unique shape; Cymbidium Lovely Moon 'Crescent' orchid.