



The City of
OKLAHOMA CITY

Press Release

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06/23/05

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World's Largest Bloom Expected to Flower in the Myriad Botanical Gardens

Oklahoma City – A rare floral event is in progress at the Myriad Botanical Gardens. The world's largest inflorescence, *Amorphophallus titanum*, also known as titan arum or corpse flower, surprised horticulturalists during the third week of June by growing at a phenomenal rate, about four inches a day. The rapid growth and unusual stem shape was a hint that the plant was preparing to bloom.

The flowering of a titan arum is a rare and significant horticultural event that has only occurred five times worldwide in 2005, and about 60 times since the late 1800's.

The specimen is on display in the Crystal Bridge Tropical Conservatory in Oklahoma City, but the exact blooming date is anybody's guess. "If our titan develops similarly to others that have recently bloomed, we project it will be at its peak of bloom during the Fourth of July holiday weekend," said Gardens Manager Allan Storjohann.

The plant, which was discovered in central Sumatra in 1878, is called the corpse flower because the bloom smells like rotting flesh when it's ready to be pollinated. The offensive odor lasts only eight hours and the bloom is expected to last two to three days. In the wild, the plant is believed to be pollinated by large carrion beetles.

Since the Myriad Garden's titan arum can't pollinate itself, staff will need to artificially pollinate the plant. "We've been lucky enough to be offered frozen pollen by Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden in Miami, Florida. Fairchild collected pollen from a titan arum that recently bloomed on May 14," Storjohann added.

The titan arum bulb was donated to the Myriad Botanical Gardens on July 13, 2000 by Baltimore physician Clark T. Riley after visiting the Crystal Bridge. "I appreciate Dr. Riley's contribution and take my hat off to the Crystal Bridge horticulture crew for their diligent care of this delicate plant. They have pampered it for five years and are ecstatic that it has initiated its world famous bloom," said Storjohann.

The Myriad Botanical Gardens is located at Reno and Robinson in downtown Oklahoma City. Crystal Bridge hours are 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday through Saturday and noon to 6 p.m. on Sunday. Admission is \$6 for adults, \$5 for seniors and students and \$3 for children 4 to 12. Log on to www.myriadgardens.com for updates on the titan arum or call (405) 297-3903 for more information.

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Titan Arum Facts

- The titan arum was discovered in central Sumatra in 1878 by the Italian botanist and explorer Dr. Odoardo Beccari.
- The first specimen flowered in cultivation at Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, England in 1889.
- The titan's botanical name, *Amorphophallus titanum*, means large shapeless phallus.
- A mature underground *corm* (tuber) produces a huge aroid bloom (*inflorescence*), which can be taller than a man.
- Pollination is believed to be performed by large carrion beetles lured by the powerful odor of decaying flesh. This overpowering stench is released in waves when the flowers are ready for pollination.
- The repulsive, blood red flower can bloom several times in its forty-year lifespan. Re-blooming is rare in captivity.
- The inflorescence arises from a corm, a swollen stem modified to store food for the plant. This corm, more or less spherical in shape and weighing 20 pounds or more, is the largest such structure known in the plant kingdom.
- The titan arum is technically not a flower but an inflorescence, which is a structure containing thousands of small male and female flowers.

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