

NEW YORK

Botanical Garden Will Unveil Eight New Greenhouses

15-Month Project Brings High Tech to Plant World

By GARY SHAPIRO
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"State of the art" is how the New York Botanical Garden's vice president for capital projects and architect, Michael Adlerstein, described the Nolen Greenhouses for Living Collections, which are opening Saturday after 15 months of construction.

Spanning almost an acre in the southeast corner of the NYBG in the Bronx, the two blocks of interconnected glasshouses (shaped somewhat like an "H") contain eight growing zones that will enable the NYBG to develop its living collections, propagate plants for exhibition, and grow plants for study, research, and conservation.

The curator of glasshouse collections, Darrin Duling, said, "Visually, it's stunning." He said its cutting-edge technology — including computer-automated features of shade, humidification, ventilation, and heat retention — would increase efficiency.

"Old-fashioned greenhouses were hinged at the top and the vents opened at the side," Mr. Duling said. "These glasshouses have vents hinged at the side, and basically the whole roof opens up at the center, and you're looking at the sky. Every house is like that." The doors have electric eyes: "If you're carrying large specimens or carts full of plants, the electric eye beam is broken and the door opens up, making it a lot more efficient in transporting materials," Mr. Duling said. The glasshouses,



FLOWER POWER A worker puts finishing touches on the installation of Tom Otterness's bronze sculpture depicting stages of the life cycle of the *Amorphophallus titanum*, known as the world's largest flower, at the entrance to the Nolen Greenhouses. KONRAD FIEDLER

made of special "low-iron glass," are equipped with retractable shade curtains pulled by motors to keep the plants cool when needed.

The old propagation range, which the Nolen Greenhouses replace, was not open to the public. Although seven of the eight Nolen Greenhouses will normally be closed to the public,

this coming weekend offers a rare opportunity to step inside. "It is the one time where we allow people to see the entire greenhouse. It will be the first time people have a behind-the-scenes look at our core collections and how we grow them," Mr. Duling said.

One area, called the Bourke-Sullivan Display House, will be open to the

public, offering themed exhibits. The first display, called "Primrose Palette," featuring classic Victorian glasshouse plants, is designed to resemble a private home's greenhouse, Mr. Duling said. "We're cultivating a lot of unusual primroses that you don't see in this country. Lots of color and texture."