



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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ENDANGERED 'ROTTING FLESH FLOWER' BLOOMING AT FRANKLIN PARK CONSERVATORY

COLUMBUS, Ohio -- An endangered and famously fascinating plant species, the titan arum (*Amorphophallus titanum*) is about to bloom at Franklin Park Conservatory for the first time in the Conservatory's recorded history.

"A flowering titan arum is a special event for any botanical garden. Some people wait a lifetime to see this," said Bruce Harkey, President and CEO of Franklin Park Conservatory. "After years of waiting for this bloom behind the scenes at Franklin Park Conservatory, we are so excited to finally showcase one here in central Ohio. It will be quite a sight and smell to behold."

While the stunning and smelly corpse plants are becoming more popular, this species of *amorphophallus* is particularly unique because of its size. Its bloom is considered the largest unbranched inflorescence in the world.

The plant on display at the Conservatory is currently about three feet tall and growing noticeably taller each day. After the bloom was initially noticed by staff, its size doubled overnight. It is expected to fully open in a few days to a week, and only for a few days. During that brief window, it will release a strong odor resembling rotting flesh, which attracts its pollinators of flies and beetles. The plant even emits its own heat, intensifying the aroma.

The *Amorphophallus titanum* is listed as endangered by the International Union for Conservation of Nature. It is native only to the Sumatran rainforests in Indonesia, where its population is currently decreasing. Even in cultivation it is uncommon, as it is difficult to care for due to a variety of reasons -- one being the size. In its vegetative (non-flowering) state, it can reach up to 20 feet tall. It is also infamous for being finicky and unpredictable, and can quickly succumb to rot. Cultivation also requires a lot of patience, as this plant will cycle between vegetative and dormant stages for years, sometimes a decade, before producing a flower. Reproducing the plant poses even more challenges, as it does not self-pollinate.

The specimen currently at the Conservatory was planted from seed at Cornell University in 2012. The Conservatory collected the plant in 2016, when the University auctioned it off at the International Plant Propagators Society. It has been cared for behind the scenes inside the Conservatory's greenhouse ever since, where it has gone through many cycles of vegetative growth before producing its first bloom on display now.



The titan arum is now on display inside the Pacific Island Water Garden at Franklin Park Conservatory, and being tracked on social media (@fpconservatory) and on the website (fpconservatory.org).

Capacity inside the Conservatory will be limited, and visitors are asked to order timed tickets online before arriving. While inside, visitors are asked to maintain at least six feet of distance between other groups, and the Conservatory strongly requests the use of face coverings when in the building and on the grounds. The complete safety policy in response to COVID-19 can be found here: fpconservatory.org/know-before-you-go.

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Franklin Park Conservatory and Botanical Gardens offers world-class horticulture, art and nature-based exhibitions, and educational programs for all ages. Situated on 40 acres on the eastern side of Franklin Park, the Conservatory features the historic 1895 John F. Wolfe Palm House; 83,000 square feet of glasshouses; botanical gardens including the Scotts Miracle-Gro Foundation Children's Garden; and meeting and event spaces. The Conservatory owns the largest collection of glass artwork by Dale Chihuly in a botanical garden and is home to internationally recognized light artist James Turrell's Light Raiment II, which illuminates the John F. Wolfe Palm House every evening from dusk until dawn.