

## BOTANICAL ART STAMPS

The Botanical Art stamp First-Day-of-Issue ceremony will take place 29 January 2016, at 11:00 AM at the American Philatelic Society's AmeriStamp/Southeastern Stamp Expo. The show will be held at the Hilton Atlanta, 255 Courtland Street NE, Atlanta, Georgia. The room for the ceremony will be announced at a later date.

The U.S. Postal Service continues its tradition of beautiful floral-themed stamps with Botanical Art, a booklet of 20 stamps featuring vintage illustrations taken from 19th- and early-20th-century plant and seed catalogs.



Beginning in the late 15th century, intrepid Europeans explored new lands in the Americas, the South Pacific, and other areas of the world. There they discovered plants unknown in Europe, which they imported for study and propagation. Scientists, gardeners, plant hunters, and collectors required accurate botanical drawings of the exotic new species.

Botanical illustrators produced works that were meticulous and highly detailed and quite often beautiful pieces of art as well. The years 1750 to 1850 are considered the height of the botanical illustrator's art.

The mid-19th century saw a flowering of another kind of botanical art. As more people discovered the joys of ornamental and recreational gardening, thriving commercial greenhouses and nurseries marketed plants—exotic as well as native—to eager gardeners.



To entice buyers, the nurseries created colorful catalogs illustrated with beautiful blossoms and lush foliage. The illustrations were idealized, romantic versions of what plants could look like, but they fueled many a garden dream.

The stamp art features ten individual designs, each a detail of an illustration from an American nursery catalog printed between 1891 and 1912. The catalogs are part of The New York Botanical Garden's Nursery and Seed Catalog Collection, one of the largest and most important collections in the U.S.

The NYBG collection and similar collections in other institutions are treasure troves of historical information for scholars and scientists studying a wide range of subjects, including the history of botany, horticulture, commercial agriculture, landscape design, plant exploration, graphic arts, and publishing.

The artists responsible for the work seen on early nursery catalogs are mostly unknown to us now, but their captivating work lives on.

Art director Ethel Kessler of Bethesda, Maryland, designed the stamps.