

BRIGHT SPOTS

CURRENT GARDEN HIGHLIGHTS

January 22, 2019

North Terrace	<p>Christmas Rose, <i>Helleborus niger</i> ‘Josef Lemper’ is a relative of the spring blooming Lenten Rose but blooms in December. This pure white, upward facing hybrid selection has flowers with yellow stamens and coarse evergreen dark leaves. In our warmer Virginia climate the flowers turn a pale green as they age. The blooms are long lasting, both on the plant and in arrangements, and they are unattractive to deer, rabbits and snails. Hellebores prefer partial shade and will slowly spread to create clumps. They will make you smile in January.</p>	
Conservatory, Front of Atrium	<p>Bromeliads. Strappy leaves of varying hues and patterns characterize members of the family Bromeliaceae, which originated in New World rainforests. Special leaf adaptions help collect nutrients from the air while the roots are used mostly for anchorage. The low-growing rosette of <i>Neoregelia</i> sp. has deep red leaves surrounding a central cup. The red and purple flower stalk of <i>Aechmea</i> ‘Del Mar’ strongly contrasts with its bright green leaves and is a beacon for pollinators.</p>	
Conservatory, East Wing & Atrium	<p>Orchids. The Garden raises more than 1,200 orchids and many types are displayed. Admire the pastel combinations of corsage orchids (<i>Cattleya</i> sp.). Look at the unique flower of <i>Paphiopedilum</i> sp. and deduce the origin of its common name, lady slipper. Orchid flowers are designed to attract specific pollinators and they use colors, patterns, shapes, and scents as lures. Many species make good houseplants - just pay attention to potting media, sunlight, humidity, and watering schedule. No ice cubes, please.</p>	
Conservatory, East Wing	<p><i>Bougainvillea</i> x ‘Monka’ Oo-la-la® is a true bright spot even on a gloomy winter day. This upright, mainly evergreen, woody-stemmed climbing shrub/vine is native to Central and South America. The genus name honors the French admiral and explorer, Louis Antoine de Bougainville. The bright magenta-red flower bracts look so soft and lovely but watch out for the wicked thorns along the branches. Popular landscape plant in warmer parts of the US.</p>	

Conservatory, Rear of Atrium	<p>Bleeding Heart Vine, <i>Clerodendrum thomsoniae</i>. Showy lavender flowers with dark red corollas cover this tropical evergreen shrub, which can be trained as a vine. Needs full sun to set blooms which can last for several months. As flower buds are produced on new season's growth, pruning should be performed after blooms fade and it is essential to keep the plant in its boundaries. For a spectacular effect, use the vine in hanging baskets. Bleeding heart vine is native to tropical western Africa.</p>	
Main Garden Walk - East Side	<p>Magnolia, <i>Magnolia x 'Sundance'</i>. This elegant tree is covered with fuzzy gray catkins that promise spring just when winter is getting most tedious. As the weather warms, the buds will open to large (20 cm) creamy yellow flowers which appear before the leaves. The Garden is home to a wide variety of magnolias including a large Southern Magnolia in Grace Arents' garden that is said to have been planted by the famed Richmond garden designer, Charles Gillette.</p>	
Four Seasons Garden, Conservatory - Outside Pots & Main Garden Walk	<p><i>Cornus spp.</i> Various dogwood species shed their leaves in autumn to reveal brilliantly colored stems. Look for the bright red stems of <i>C. alba</i> 'Elegantissima' in the Four Seasons Garden. Conservatory pots feature the sulfur stems of <i>C. sericea</i> 'Silver and Gold', purple pansies, and black mondo grass. The tangerine stems of <i>C. sanguinea</i> 'Midwinter Fire' electrify the main garden walk. Pruning out a third of the stems each winter stimulates new growth which will give constant color. Plant any one of these varieties in front of evergreens for a real showstopping combination!</p>	
Main Garden Walk - East Side	<p>Adam's Needle, <i>Yucca filamentosa</i> 'Color Guard' is a virtually stemless broadleaf evergreen shrub, native to beaches and fields from South Carolina to Florida and west to Mississippi. Slightly arching, leathery leaves have green margins and striking creamy gold centers. It's drought tolerant when established and ideal as an accent in the landscape or in containers. With age, tall flower stalks appear in mid-summer, producing long lasting creamy white flowers.</p>	