

# BRIGHT SPOTS

## CURRENT GARDEN HIGHLIGHTS

July 11, 2021

### + Virginia Native Plant

### \*Location of Bright Spots Sign

<p><b>Entrance Gate</b></p>	<p><b>Maize, corn, <i>Zea mays</i></b> is an annual cereal grass and one of the most important food crops world-wide. First domesticated in Mexico, Indigenous peoples in the Americas often grew the complementary plants of beans and squash together with corn in a system known as “three sisters”. Maize offers support for the beans and beans provide nitrogen to the soil. Squash grows as a ground cover to shade the soil, suppress weeds and conserve moisture.</p>	
<p><b>Throughout</b></p>	<p><b>Ornamental grasses</b> are suited to most any garden setting with the mind-boggling array of color (bold burgundy, soft blue-green or screaming chartreuse), size (petite mounding fescues to tall, stately reed grasses) and textures (coarse blades to the aptly named feather grass). Ecologically sound, they require minimal maintenance, are relatively pest and disease free and drought tolerant. Especially attractive in the winter landscape, ornamental grasses provide food and shelter for native wildlife.</p>	
<p><b>Upper Fountain Garden, Main Garden Walk &amp; Throughout</b></p>	<p><b>Hardy hibiscus, swamp rose mallow, <i>Hibiscus</i>.</b> Dinner-plate sized blossoms in whites, pinks and reds cover plants that can reach 7 ft. and form hedges. Native to wet areas, and hardy in Zones 5-9, hibiscus works well in low garden spots. Full sun, circulating air and consistently moist soil produce the best plants. Hibiscus flowers symbolize beauty and femininity, with purity also being attributed to the plants producing white blooms.</p>	
<p><b>Four Seasons Garden &amp; Throughout</b></p>	<p><b>+Coneflower, <i>Echinacea</i>.</b> The Garden hosts many species and hybrids of this native - favored by birds, bees and butterflies. The soft drooping ray florets come in many colors, usually with contrasting spiky cone seeds (echinos means sea urchin in Greek), making this easy-to-grow plant especially attractive during its 2 months of bloom. Roots and leaves were used as immunostimulants and medicinal cures by Native Americans, as they are today.</p>	

<p><b>Flagler Garden &amp; Cherry Tree Walk</b></p>	<p><b>+Cup plant, <i>Silphium perfoliatum</i>.</b> The square stems appear to grow through the leaf, hence the species name. The “cup” that results catches rain, a boon for birds. The genus name refers to the resinous sap, which was used by Native Americans as a chewing gum to freshen breath and prevent nausea. Plant in groups to support these tall plants from drooping. Prefer moist locations and full sun.</p>	
<p><b>Flagler Garden</b></p>	<p><b>Montbretia, <i>Crocsmia</i>,</b> is a native of S. Africa but grows very well in Z. 6-9 of the US. The numerous fans of red tubular flowers open from the base towards the tip of the pedicel, all along stems that arch well above wide, pleated foliage. Exotic in the garden and lasting as a cut flower. In sun or part-shade, it's a carefree deciduous perennial whose corms can be divided &amp; shared in the spring. Attracts hummingbirds ... and sometimes spider mites.</p>	
<p><b>Cherry Tree Walk – Sydnor Lake</b></p>	<p><b>Lotus, <i>Nelumbo</i>. <i>N. nucifera</i></b> 'Mrs. Perry D. Slocum' is blooming along the shore in Sydnor Lake. The large double blooms are fragrant, opening deep pink and transitioning to yellow. The striking seed heads grow larger as they mature and can be used (dried) to dramatic effect in flower arrangements. Lotus tubers and seeds are edible and were included in the diet of Native Americans.</p>	
<p><b>Cherry Tree Walk - East Side</b></p>	<p><b>Ornamental onion, <i>Allium</i> 'Millenium'</b>. This hybrid onion bulb, deliberately spelled with one 'n', has umbrels of green-turning-pink flowers held tall on individual scapes. A stunning plant for the edge of the border, this onion is a well-behaved, clump-forming plant that won't spread or self-seed (if dead-headed). The slight onion fragrance deters deer and rabbits but won't keep one from using the cut flowers indoors.</p>	
<p><b>Throughout</b></p>	<p><b>+Black-eyed Susan, yellow cone flower, <i>Rudbeckia</i>.</b> Someone gave Susan, a companion plant of sweet William, a black eye. Regardless of the mystery, look for the more than 15 different species in the Garden, many of which are Virginia natives &amp; some with green eyes. These hardy perennials are quick to grow, long-blooming, self-seeding, medicinal and attractive to bees and birds. Accustomed to Richmond weather, they like this hot, humid weather - so much that they regrow every summer.</p>	