

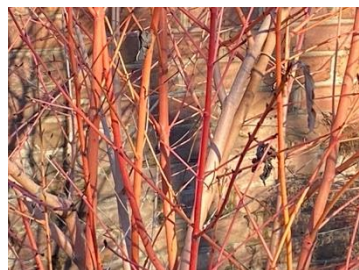
BRIGHT SPOTS

CURRENT GARDEN HIGHLIGHTS

January 10, 2022

+ Virginia Native Plant

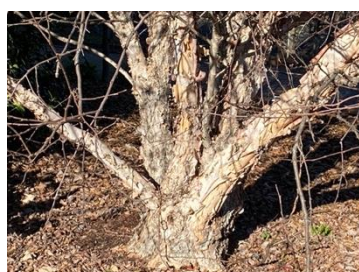
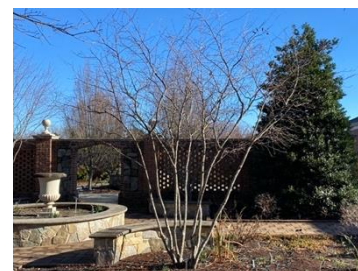
Walking the garden at this time of year will allow you to notice some features obscured by the rioting color and profusion of spring. January provides an ideal opportunity to observe the “architecture” of deciduous trees and shrubs. Look for bark color: the cool white branches of the sycamore that towers near Sydnor Lake vs. the warm cinnamon colored bark of the ‘Natchez’ crape myrtles in Flagler. Look for shape: the ridged bark and spreading horizontal branches of Persian ironwood in Asian Valley vs. the slim multi-trunked apple serviceberry in Bragdon with smooth mottled bark. Look for texture: the smooth, thin, red, yellow and coral stems of dogwood varieties vs. the deeply peeling bark of the mature river birch. There really is a lot to interest a visitor in the winter garden!



Dogwood, *Cornus*. For winter interest, the blazing stems of some dogwoods are ideal. Bloodtwig dogwood, *C. sanguinea* ‘Anny’ Winter Flame™ has golden stems which transition to orange and then red at the tips (left photo). Red twig dogwood, *C. sericea* ‘Baileyi’, has bright red stems (right photo) and there is even a cultivar with yellow stems (‘Flaviramea’). Stem color occurs on young stems; remove about 25% of older stems in the spring for best fall color. **Upper Fountain Garden & throughout**



Apple serviceberry, *Amelanchier* × *grandiflora* ‘Autumn Brilliance’ gently frames the **Bragdon Memorial Garden** with 4 delicate, multi-trunk specimens. The smooth, pale gray, mottled bark stands out now, as the delicate white flower clusters in spring and fine fall color will in the year to come. The genus is native to eastern North America; the purple fruit provides food for birds & humans. It prefers some shade and moist but well-drained soil.



+River birch, *Betula nigra*. Shaggy papery bark characterizes native trees which occur throughout the eastern USA in Zones 4-9. Fast-growing natives occur in floodplains, swampy bottoms and along streams. *Betula nigra* ‘Cully’ Heritage™ (**Flagler**) is a cultivar prized for its creamy to orange-brown scales, height (40 to 70 ft.) and multi-trunked tree. ‘Little King’ (**Main Garden Walk**) (photos) has a brownish inner bark and is more compact (8 to 10 ft.); although naturally multi-trunked, it can be trained as a single trunk.





Chinese wingnut, *Pterocarya stenoptera* is in the walnut family. The spreading canopy casts dappled shade but watch out for the shallow, aggressive root system that can damage sidewalks and driveways. Our tree's roots have created a lovely series of planting pockets that allow us to showcase azaleas and other shade loving plants. Unless you have significant space, best admire this tree in its location near the Tea House in **Asian Valley**.



Persian ironwood, *Parrotia persica*, native to Iran, is a small to medium deciduous tree. A relative of witch-hazel, it is blooming now with tiny clusters of cherry red stamens adding to its already significant attractions. The limbs spread gracefully out and up, while the mature bark displays patches of green, tan and gray. Leaf color transitions through the growing season from red/purple, to lustrous green and then fall shades of yellow, orange, & red. **Asian Valley**



Crape myrtle, *Lagerstroemia* 'Natchez'. These trees have shapely, majestic trunks that will arrest your stroll through **Flagler Garden**. Most of the exfoliating bark has been shed, leaving smooth-skinned, cinnamon-colored warriors that dominate the winter landscape. While some crape myrtles have shaggy tan-orange (see *L. indica* 'Potomac') or smooth, mottled gray winter bark, the silhouettes of all are striking.



Flowering cherry, *Prunus takesimensis* is one of the many trees in our **Cherry Tree Walk** around **Lake Sydnor**. Usually valued for its spring bloom, the tree bark draws attention today, smooth satiny texture glows in the winter sunlight in contrast to rough ridges. Known to grow in wet locations in its native habitat, *P. takesimensis* is being trialed by the National Park Service in some of the wettest locations around the DC Tidal Basin.



+American sycamore, *Platanus occidentalis*. In winter, this native tree stands out because of its grand size and white bark. Why does the brown bark exfoliate to reveal white? One idea is that this allows for winter photosynthesis. Another is that the stiff bark refuses to stretch with the growth. Regardless, the tree's size and habit of littering seed pods, twigs, big leaves and bark, mean it is best left in the woods, to be enjoyed from afar. **Streb Conifer Garden**

