

BRIGHT SPOTS

CURRENT GARDEN HIGHLIGHTS

April 4, 2022

+ Virginia Native Plant

*Location of Bright Spots Sign

While everyone's attention is focused upward toward the flowering trees of early April, or caught in delight at the exuberant colors of the tulips flowing down the **Main Garden Walk**, there are some other fleeting beauties that are easy to miss. This is peak time in Virginia for native spring ephemerals. Stroll along the **Woodland Walk** in **Flagler Garden** to discover wood lily (*Trillium*), Jack-in-the-Pulpit, (*Arisaema triphyllum*) and the delicate, tiny blue blossoms of Jacob's ladder (*Polemonium reptans*). As the name indicates, the blooms come and go quickly. Why so fast? Native woodland flowers must bloom and set seed before the canopy above them leafs out, blocking the sunlight.



Pearlbush, *Exochorda* × *macrantha* 'The Bride'. This Asian shrub in the rose family sparkles with bride-white flowers set against luscious green leaves. The buds resemble pearls, adding to the wedding image. Pest and disease-free, tolerant of heat and drought, in sun this plant can grow to 4x4'. Prune for shape just following blooms. Received the Award of Garden Merit by the RHS. ***Opposite Bragdon Garden, by the KEC**



+**Serviceberry, shadbush, *Amelanchier***. Valuable in the landscape, serviceberry is a native graceful, airy shrub/small tree that blooms in early spring with delicate white, mildly fragrant flowers. Small berry-like fruit ripen in June and are loved by birds and other wildlife; it's also a standout in fall when the leaves turn shades of gold and red. Plant this as an excellent replacement for the invasive Bradford pear. Look for it in ***Bragdon Garden and throughout**.



Tulips, *Tulipa*, fill the open upper Garden spaces with color – the genus' claim to fame. Notable is the orange/red mix in the **Luck Garden** as you enter the KEC. Usually treated as annuals, tulips are best grown in sun in organically rich soil with good drainage. Or, try to naturalize the long-lived perennial, *T. clusiana* 'Lady Jane', found along the ***Main Garden Walk**; cutting the stem just after flowering and leaving the leaves to yellow will increase your success.





Acer. Maple trees have begun to flower and leaf out. You will find every color, size and shape of Japanese maple in ***Asian Valley**. The lime green *Acer palmatum* ‘Okushimo’ has sparkling red flowers (right). The full moon maple (*A. japonicum* ‘Aconitifolium’) droops with bright red flower clusters (left). Others, with more subtle beginnings, are slowly revealing their potential. Small in stature, these lissome trees bring us a surprising amount of pleasure during the year.



Viburnum. Our Garden Explorer database (found on our website) lists over forty different viburnums. Some are shrubs, others multi-trunk small trees. The arrow-wood, or fragrant snowball, (*V. × carlcephalum*), has puffballs of perfumed flowers (pictured here in ***Flagler Garden**) whereas the native blackhaw, (*V. prunifolium*), has flat-topped, nonfragrant flowers. Follow your nose & eyes to find these specimens in the next few weeks.



+**Virginia bluebell, *Mertensia virginica***, is a native ephemeral wildflower that thrives in moist, rich woodland soil in part to full shade. Spreading clumps will form a charming colony over time. Flowers begin with pink buds and mature to cornflower blue trumpets, reverting to pink after pollination. The plants go dormant and the foliage dies to the ground in mid-summer so bluebells are often paired with other shade lovers (like ferns, hostas or astilbes) to then take over. **Throughout**



+**Golden ragwort, *Packera aurea***, is a perennial and central Virginia native. The name “aurea” refers to the golden yellow color of the bloom. The long-lasting panicles of daisy-like flowers attract pollinators. The heart-shaped glossy green leaves provide ground cover after the flowers have faded. (This foliage is toxic to most herbivores!) In favorable growing conditions this plant will naturalize into large colonies. Plant in full sun to partial shade in average to wet soil. ***Flagler Garden**



Ferns. These alien looking fiddleheads emerging in shady nooks in the ***Woodland Walk** are from the same plants that will later welcome us into those cool glades on scorching days. In shade, ferns offer a variety of shapes, colors and textures: *Dryopteris erythrosora* is an evergreen fern with striking fall color and *Osmundastrum cinnamomeum* (cinnamon fern – shown here) hosts several species of caterpillars. Ferns have also been useful in remediating contaminated soils. **Throughout**

