

BRIGHT SPOTS

CURRENT GARDEN HIGHLIGHTS

June 27, 2022

+ Virginia Native Plant

*Location of Bright Spots Sign

Our water plants are starting to make a splash! Water lilies of all sizes and colors are appearing in the **Conservatory** ponds and the majestic ‘Mrs. Perry D. Slocum’ is holding court along the banks of Lake Sydnor. This beautiful lotus, *Nelumbo* ‘Mrs. Perry D. Slocum’ was first introduced in 1964. It is a hybrid of *Nelumbo* ‘Rosea Plena’ and *Nelumbo lutea* (the American yellow lotus, native to the eastern and central US). The flowers are easily viewed along the **south bank of Sydnor Lake** from the Lotus Bridge. The blooms have 86 petals in shades of pink and yellow and can be 12” across. They are fragrant, with an anise scent. The leaves are no less showy, growing to almost 2’ across, and the seed pod is a favorite of floral designers wanting to add dramatic flair to their arrangements. Lotus tubers and seeds are edible and were included in the diet of Native Americans. *Nelumbo nucifera*, the lotus native to Asia, India, and Egypt, and depicted in VMFA’s Asian and Indian galleries, is also edible. Slocum notes that a thick–rhizomed variety is planted as a food crop in Taiwan.



+ **Coneflower, *Echinacea***. The Garden hosts many species and hybrids of this native that is 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. **Four Seasons Garden and throughout the Garden.**



Lily of the Nile, *Agapanthus*. This love (*agape*) flower (*anthos*) is native to South Africa, not along the Nile. The Garden showcases the plant’s beauty both in loamy soil (**Central Garden & throughout**) and in planters (**Conservatory entrance**). The tall, self-contained bouquets of purple, blue or white tubular flowers, each with a dark central stripe, are presented on strong stems & bloom all summer. Some are evergreen and all are resistant to deer.



+ **Smooth hydrangea, *Hydrangea arborescens***, an Eastern U.S. native, prefers a shady location with consistent moisture. As blooms form on new stems, these plants are not damaged from a harsh winter, late frost or spring pruning. Named cultivars in the Garden include the ‘Haas’ Halo’ lacecap (in **front of the Conservatory**) & the white mop head ‘Annabelle’ (**Lucy Payne Minor Garden**). Watch the hungry bees!





Hardy hibiscus, swamp rose mallow, *Hibiscus*. Dinner-plate sized blossoms in whites, pinks and reds cover plants that can reach 7' tall. Native to wet areas and hardy in USDA Zones 5-9, this 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. **Fountain Garden and throughout.**



+ **Yellow coneflower, *Rudbeckia*.** Look for the more than 15 different species in the Garden, many of which are Virginia natives & some with green eyes. These hardy perennials are quick to grow (sometimes tall, like this *Rudbeckia maxima*), long-blooming, self-seeding, medicinal and attractive to bees and birds. They like our hot, humid weather - so much that they regrow every summer. **Asian Valley and throughout.**



+ **Cup plant, *Silphium perfoliatum*.** The square stems appear to grow through the leaf, hence the species name. The “cup” that results will catch 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. This plant prefers moist locations and full sun. **Flagler Garden and Cherry Tree Walk.**



Montbretia, *Crocosmia*, is a native of South Africa but grows very well in USDA Zones 6-9. 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 & shared in the spring. Attracts hummingbirds ... and sometimes spider mites. **Flagler Garden.**



+ **Purple passionflower, *Passiflora incarnata*,** is a native vine that develops exotic, complex, fragrant and symbolic purple flowers during summer. Butterflies, hummingbirds and bees share our fascination. Up your trellis and under your feet, this fast-growing plant also produces medicinal tea leaves and edible fruit. Maypop, as the fruit is called, “pops” when stepped upon in its green stage, but it is better saved until autumn brings maturity and sweetness. **Cherry Tree Walk by the Children's Garden.**

