

BRIGHT SPOTS

CURRENT GARDEN HIGHLIGHTS

October 24, 2022

+ Virginia Native Plant

The vibrant reds, yellows and oranges of autumn are sparkling throughout the Garden, and all the spent vegetation of the summer annuals has been cleared away. While the tidy mulch is an essential support for the ground lighting that will be part of the holiday Dominion Energy GardenFest of Lights display and a cozy cover for the spring blooming bulbs that rest beneath it, our native pollinators (butterflies, wasps, moths, fireflies and beetles) will benefit if you DON'T clear vegetation. These vital pollinators need dried leaves, hollow stems, brush and rock piles to provide food and shelter throughout the winter. So, please keep your cleaning to a minimum. Seed heads left on dried hollow stalks will help feed winter birds and their fledglings will need live insects to devour come spring. For more information consult "Nesting & Overwintering Habitat for Pollinators & Other Beneficial Insects" at the Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation. (Xerces.org)



+Staghorn sumac, *Rhus typhina*. The brilliant scarlet fall foliage of these tall deciduous shrubs commands our attention. In Old French, sumac means "red" and describes the berries, a source of food for birds and our culinary uses. Native Americans used the stems in pipe making. Sumac forms thickets through seeding and root suckering and prefers dry well-drained soil. This native is best grown in naturalized areas such as the **Anderson Wildflower Meadow** or in contained places such as in **Parking Lot B**.



+Blue star, *Amsonia hubrichtii* and *A. tabernaemontana*, may be a star in the spring garden with its pale-blue star flowers, but its second act in the fall is the real showstopper. Cooler temperatures trigger the feathery thread-like foliage to turn a brilliant gold. Comfortable in full sun to part shade and deer resistant, amsonia is a welcome addition to a rain garden, a butterfly pollinator plot or a back border –perhaps as a highlight specimen in front of a scarlet maple tree. **Bragdon Garden, Main Garden Walk and elsewhere.**



+Winterberry, *Ilex verticillata*, is a native deciduous shrub that produces a crop of brightly colored red, orange or pale-yellow berries that will persist into winter (hence the common name) and provides food for our feathered friends. Verticillata is Latin for "whorled" and refers to the arrangement of the berries around the stems. A large grove of 'Winter Gold' shrubs is on the **Main Garden Walk** and others can be seen around the **Cherry Tree Walk**. Both male and female plants are needed.





+**Aster**. In Greek, aster means “star” and aptly describes the shape of the blooms in the family Asteraceae, which are sun-loving drought-resistant sources of fall pollen. The numerous aster species sequentially bloom from summer to mid-fall. This native, late-flowering *Symphotrichum oblongifolium* ‘Raydon’s Favorite’, is in bloom in front of the **Conservatory** and in **Flagler Garden**. Its violet color and fragrance welcome butterflies.



Cushion mum, hardy chrysanthemum, *Dendranthemum* ‘Celo’s Pink’. Linnaeus named these sturdy perennials from the Greek words chrysos (gold) and anthemon (flower). Unlike potted garden mums, these perennial hardy mums provide pollinator loving beauty from October to frost every year. Cut the plant back by half in early summer and it will bloom on shorter stems that will not flop over. Then, root your cuttings in water to share with friends. **Fountain Garden**.



Kaki, *Diospyros kaki*, is a small ornamental tree in **Asian Valley** that is native to China and Korea and cultivated extensively in Japan. In late spring, fragrant non-showy flowers bloom, creamy-white female and pink toned male blossoms. Edible fruit matures to bright orange in late fall and often persists on the tree in winter after leaf drop. Persimmons can be eaten whole, sliced, or made into jams or jellies. Look up!



+**Swamp cypress, bald cypress, *Taxodium distichum***, is a large native conifer that is in step with autumn; its deciduous needle-like leaves turn coppery-red and fall to the ground. Because of the color, many visitors express concern that the trees are dying. This cypress is at home in wet areas and the rot-resistant wood makes excellent barrels and railroad ties. Magnificent specimens surround the **West Island Garden** and edge parts of the **Cherry Tree Walk**.



Pineapple sage, *Salvia elegans*, is named for its bright-yellow foliage in late fall and the pineapple scent from crushed leaves. Tempting enough to eat – and it can be! Now, the plant has attractive but small, deep-red flowers. Although the species is not native, this tender perennial is winter hardy to USDA Zone 8, where it can be grown in beds, borders or herb gardens. **Cherry Tree Walk approaching Lucy Payne Minor Garden**.

