

BRIGHT SPOTS

CURRENT GARDEN HIGHLIGHTS

September 26, 2022

+ Virginia Native Plant

Our **Kroger Community Kitchen Garden** is a bit off the beaten path. A painted pathway guides visitors from the Conservatory through the welcoming arbor into a beautiful example of sustainable small-scale farming. Best practices include crop diversity and rotation, no pesticides or synthetic fertilizers and the strategic placement of flowering plants to attract beneficial insects and pollinators. Since 2009 our organically managed plot has been growing fresh produce for Feed More's Community Kitchen. In a time of growing food insecurity, Kid's Café, Meals on Wheels and Summer Food Service programs provide healthy meals to vulnerable community members. Thanks to hard work from LGBG staff and service teams from local businesses, this 1/3-acre garden has harvested 3,613 pounds of tasty produce so far this year, more than double the 2021 yield. Cool weather crops are now in the ground; carrots, beets, onions and collards will extend the harvest.



Pineapple, *Ananas comosus*. The gardens outside the **Robins Visitor Center** are underappreciated gems. Look in the pots to see our pineapple plants, members of the bromeliad family native to Brazil. First seen by Columbus in 1493, pineapples were distributed around the world by tall sailing ships. Greenhouses later allowed pineapples to be grown throughout Europe. To grow your own pineapple, remove the leafy crown and plant it in moist potting soil. Keep the temperature above 60 degrees and be patient!



Lion's tail, lion's ear, *Leonotis leonurus*, is native to South Africa but you can see it here in the **Medicinal Garden**. While this annual may relieve pulmonary ailments, its immediate attraction is its unusual tubular orange flowers that quickly grow up the stems in tiers. Blooms last a long time in the garden and in a container or in a vase. Without the bother of pests, disease, heat, drought or deer and with the benefit of attracting hummingbirds, bees & butterflies, you can enjoy lion's tail every year by sowing its seeds in a sunny place before the final frost.



+ **Beautyberry, *Callicarpa americana*.** The gracefully arching branches of this native shrub are resplendent now with iridescent magenta berry-like fruits. The genus name translates as "beautiful fruit". They are edible, but not appetizing to humans; many native bird species find them quite tasty, however. Beautyberry can grow to 9' with favorable conditions (sun and moist, rich soil) but takes well to pruning. It can be reshaped in fall or even late winter, as it blooms on new growth. **Healing Garden.**





+ **Tickseed, *Coreopsis palustris* ‘Summer Sunshine’**, blooms for about 6 weeks in the fall. The plant is easily grown in full sun & dry soil and its flowers (coreopsis means “always cheerful”) are a late season food source for bees & butterflies. Called tickseed, the seeds resemble ticks! ‘Summer Sunshine’ is the highest rated coreopsis from the Mt. Cuba trial gardens for its disease resistance, longevity and floral display. **Central Garden.**



+ **Obedient plant, *Physostegia virginiana* ‘Vivid’**. The bright pinkish lavender flowers of this cultivar are indeed ‘Vivid.’ The common name derives from its willingness to briefly retain its position when the flower is bent to one side. These long-lived flowers, which are good for cutting, provide nectar for hummingbirds and butterflies. Plants prefer moist, acidic, well-drained soil, although they will tolerate clay soil. An added benefit - it is deer resistant. **Asian Valley.**



Asters. 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. *Symphotrichum oblongifolium* ‘October Skies’ (on right) is a low bushy plant with abundant bright blue flowers (**Cherry Tree Walk**). *Aster tataricus* ‘Jindai’ (on left) with paler blossoms, stands straight and 6’ tall like a sentinel in the **Central Garden**. Neither of these plants require staking to see their pretty faces!



+ **Goldenrod, *Solidago***. Sometimes mistaken for ragweed, goldenrod’s pollen is too heavy & sticky to be airborne, so it does not cause hay fever. Now at its peak, there are numerous species to see sweeping through the **Anderson Wildflower Meadow** and **throughout** the Garden. *S. rugosa* ‘Fireworks’ (photo) has an airy, branching habit. Attractive to pollinators, goldenrod prefers full sun and is drought tolerant. The genus name is Latin, “to make whole,” in reference to its medicinal properties to treat burns and relieve fever.



+ **Jewelweed, *Impatiens capensis***. The glowing orange blossoms on this native annual help explain its common name and the explosive release of seed at a touch on a dry capsule explain its genus name - “impatience” in English. This plant is a volunteer on the edge of the **Anderson Wildflower Meadow**. Native Americans used it medicinally. Compounds in the stem & leaves reduce skin irritations. It is also a butterfly magnet!

