

BRIGHT SPOTS

CURRENT GARDEN HIGHLIGHTS

July 24, 2023

“+” Denotes a Virginia Native Plant

Location, location, location! This cautionary instruction applies to plants as well as real estate. As you stroll the Garden, notice where plants and trees are sited. Some prefer full sun (Louise Cochrane Rose Garden) while others are happy in shade (Flagler Garden). The lotus, at the edge of Sydnor Lake, doesn't mind wet feet. Asian Valley has some steeply sloping sites where plants that need good drainage, such as Asian maple trees, thrive. In contrast, the level beds of Grace Arents Garden lend themselves to more formal designs. Don't forget to notice companion plantings. A delightful color combination won't work if the plants require different soil, moisture or light conditions.



Dwarf papyrus, *Cyperus papyrus*. Feathery grass-like threads top the triangular stems. Within are tiny greenish-beige flowers that are wind pollinated. Multiple types of papyrus are native to African wetlands and ancient Egyptians used to make rope, sandals, boats and paper. Papyrus is a great bog or pond plant. In the fall, bring inside, place in a sunny window and maintain wet soil and humidity with a saucer or drip tray. **North Terrace.**



Golden lace, *Patrinia scabiosifolia*. Acquired in 2018, this plant has been returning every year with its rise of 3-6' thin stems balancing yellow inflorescent flowers. Come September, yellow seed heads develop and the foliage turns bronze. Loving our sun, heat and humidity, and enticing pollinators galore, this long-blooming Asian perennial is a boon to our August gardens, attracts butterflies and bee pollinators, is low maintenance, makes a lasting cut flower and even self-seeds without being invasive. **Four Seasons Garden.**



+ **Wild senna, *Senna marilandica*.** What a happy plant! It's a native perennial in USDA Zones 4-9 that likes full sun but doesn't care about much else: sandy or clay soil - either is fine; heat and humidity - loves it; insects - no problem; diseases - never heard of them. This stalwart grows 4-6' high and 2-3' wide. Yellow flowers bloom in the summer, attracting bees, as they develop long seed pods throughout the season. **Meditation Garden.**





+ **Hardy hibiscus, swamp rose mallow, *Hibiscus***. Dinner-plate sized blossoms in whites, pinks and reds cover plants that can reach 7' and form hedges. Native to wet areas, and hardy in USDA Zones 5-9, hibiscus works well in low garden spots. Full sun, circulating air and consistently moist soil produce the best plants. Many of the Garden's hibiscuses are native, not to be confused with non-native or annual plants found in many big box stores. **Throughout the Garden.**



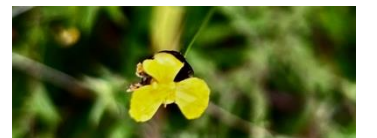
+ **Cup plant, *Silphium perfoliatum***. The bright-yellow flowers are very attractive to pollinators. The square stems appear to grow through the leaf, hence the species name. The "cup" that results catches the rain, a boon for birds. The genus name refers to the resinous sap, used by Native Americans as a chewing gum to freshen breath and prevent nausea. Plant in groups to support these tall plants from drooping. *Silphium* prefers moist locations and full sun. **Upper Terrace and Main Garden Walk.**



+ **Joe Pye weed, *Eutrochium* (formerly *Eupatorium*)**. Domes of flowers are filled with nectar and pollen, attracting many pollinators including various butterflies and honeybees. This herbaceous perennial is deer-resistant and works well in borders and naturalized areas. Garden Explorer lists more than ten varieties, from 7' high to 3' high dwarf varieties, that can be grown easily in full sun to partial-shade and moist soils. Be sure to keep their feet wet! **Throughout the Garden.**



West Island Garden is a constructed wetland around a pond made from rainwater that has been collected throughout the property and recycled. A series of boardwalks allow close-up views of some interesting native plants. **Bog yellow eyed grass, *Xyris difformis*** (right above) is a delicate and airy plant that plays nicely with the chunky insect devouring pitchers of **Pitcher plant, *Sarracenia*** (left). The composition is tied together by their yellow color. **Meadow Beauty, *Rhexia virginica*** (right, below) makes a lovely contrast.



+ **Little bluestem, *Schizachyrium scoparium* 'Twilight Zone'**. Nearly iridescent upright foliage provides an eerily beautiful garden feature with its silvery-mauve purple cast; bright purple highlights appearing in the fall. Thrives in full sun and tough dry spots. Supports pollinators and provides winter food, nesting material and cover for birds. 'Twilight Zone' is a fun and attractive ornamental grass. **Children's Tree House.**

