

# BRIGHT SPOTS

## CURRENT GARDEN HIGHLIGHTS

August 28, 2023

“+” Denotes a Virginia Native Plant

While early spring sunshine inspires us all to plant something as winter departs, fall is really the optimal time to plant in Virginia. The soil does not freeze in our temperate winter, allowing roots to settle in and develop before facing the summer’s scorching heat. Local stores display rows of yellow or maroon chrysanthemums at this time of year, but they are not your only option. Visit the Garden to identify some fall blooming plants and shrubs you might like to consider acquiring. And be sure to visit our fall Plant Sale (**September 15-16**) to view hundreds of possibilities, allowing you to select from a varied color palette and encounter a selection of native plants that will delight our local pollinators.



Four Seasons Garden

**Balloon plant, *Gomphocarpus physocarpa***, a member of the milkweed family from South Africa, is grown in Richmond as a seasonal annual. (USDA Zone 8-10). This tall (up to 6’), back of the border plant is a source of nectar for monarch butterflies and is pollinated only by vespid wasps and hornets. Clusters of insignificant creamy-white vanilla scented flowers are followed by odd looking fruit that resembles spiny lime-green balloons. Dried, these seed pods are handsome additions to floral arrangements.



Four Seasons Garden



*Allium* ‘Lavender Bubbles’ in Meditation Garden

**Ornamental onion, *Allium***. This hybrid onion bulb has umbrels of green-turning-pink flowers held tall on individual scapes. A stunning plant for the edge of a border, this onion is a well-behaved clump-forming plant that won’t spread or self-seed if dead-headed. We’ve watched this through the summer as flowers fade – and now have been replaced by a second flush! The slight onion fragrance deters deer and rabbits but won’t keep one from using the cut flowers indoors. **Fountain Garden, Meditation Garden & throughout.**



*Allium* ‘Lavender Bubbles’ in Meditation Garden



Evelyn G. Luck Garden

**Heliotrope, *Heliotropium arborescens* ‘Marine’**. This native of Peru became a staple of European cottage gardens and a Victorian favorite. The dark-purple flower heads have a sweet floral scent, with notes of vanilla, which explains its use in 19<sup>th</sup> century perfumes and cosmetics. Treat heliotrope as a summer annual bedding plant or a container plant that can be over-wintered inside. Pinch-back the plants to promote bushy growth and deadhead to promote flowering. All parts of the plant are toxic and should not be ingested.



Evelyn G. Luck Garden



**H. 'Lajos' Autumn Charm™ in Fountain Garden West**

**Stonecrop, *Hylotelephium* (syn. *Sedum*),** is a succulent herbaceous perennial that is beginning its autumn show. While forgiving of drought and poor rocky soil, all sedums need sun, heat and good drainage. These clump-forming plants range in size from creeping to 3'. The flat-topped showy flower color develops from green to pink or red. Bees and butterflies love them. Cut off a stem in the spring and you can root another plant. **Throughout.**



**H. 'Lajos' Autumn Charm™ in Fountain Garden West**



***Caryopteris x clandonensis* 'Dark Knight' in Fountain Garden West**

**Bluebeard, *Caryopteris* × *clandonensis*.** True blue flowers are always highly prized in the garden and this low shrub gets the gold. In late summer, blue flowers with “beards” of leaves at their base resemble clouds of smoke as they grow along the stems. Brush your hand across the silvery-gray foliage to release a lovely fragrance. This shrub is always covered with butterflies, bees and other beneficial insects. While it is a pollinator favorite, deer turn up their noses. **Healing Garden & elsewhere.**



***Caryopteris x clandonensis* 'Dark Knight' in Fountain Garden West**

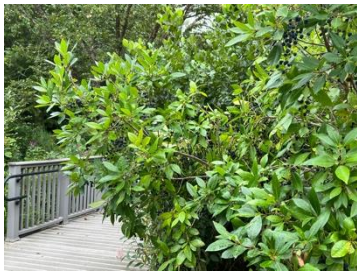


**Main Garden Walk**

**Green-headed coneflower, *Rudbeckia laciniata*,** an Eastern native perennial, is different from most Rudbeckias as it sports a green cone. Give this deer resistant plant plenty of room, as it grows 3-10' tall and spreads by underground roots. It will bloom in sun, part sun or shade, and prefers a moist location. The flowers are enjoyed by many kinds of bees, beneficial wasps and butterflies. After flowering, leave the seed heads and watch the goldfinches flock to get the seed!



**Main Garden Walk**



**Asian Valley**

**+Fringe tree, *Chionanthus virginicus*,** is an outstanding small deciduous ornamental tree. The botanical name translates as “snow flower”. Noted for its fragrant white blooms in spring, it currently commands a second look for its olive-like black berries dangling in clusters from delicate stems. The berries provide food for birds and other wildlife. The dried roots and bark were used as an anti-inflammatory by Native Americans. These small trees mature at 12-20', ideal for a small garden.



**Asian Valley**



**Main Garden Walk & throughout**

**Windflower, *Anemone hupehensis*,** is a native of the Chinese province Hupeh. Victorian plant hunter Robert Fortune introduced it to Europe in 1844. This perennial is anchored by a basal rosette of dark-green leaves and has shallow saucer-like flowers in pink or white, single or double, which sway in the breeze at the end of long wiry stems. Plant in a protected location with soft shade and moist fertile soil. **Main Garden Walk & throughout.**



**Main Garden Walk & throughout**