

# BRIGHT SPOTS

## CURRENT GARDEN HIGHLIGHTS

April 22, 2024

### + Virginia Native Plant

This is Historic Garden Week in Virginia and while the daffodils and tulips may have faded, new life is stirring in other parts of the Garden. The birds are a background symphony of sound, darting through the trees and scuffling in the leaves. The turtles are sunning on the banks of the lake and there is a riot of color and fragrance all around. As you stroll our pathways, be sure to look up, down and all around to appreciate all that springtime in Virginia has to offer.



**Florida flame azalea in the North Entrance Terrace**

+**Rhododendron**. Azaleas, a subset of the genus *Rhododendron*, define springtime in Virginia. Perfect for the home landscape, they provide color throughout the season. The brilliant Florida flame azalea (*Rhododendron austrinum*) is a deciduous N. American native with long stamens that resemble a cat's whiskers. This easy-to-grow fragrant shrub will draw bees and hummingbirds to your garden. Azaleas grow best in partial shade and slightly acidic soil with plenty of organic matter and good drainage. **Visitor Center – North Terrace**



**Flowers of the Florida flame azalea**



**Flowers of the Lady Banks rose**

**Lady Banks rose, *Rosa banksiae***, is a vigorous, thornless climbing rose that is the first to bloom in spring. A miniature double yellow rose, it was named for the wife of Sir Joseph Banks – one of the founders of the UK's Royal Horticultural Society. Achieving its Award of Garden Merit prize, this rose proves its excellence by also being disease and pest resistant. Grow this aggressive climber over a wall or pergola and maybe your specimen will top the one in Tombstone, AZ that covers over 8000 sq ft! That is another story. **Four Seasons & Grace Arents**



**Four Seasons Garden**



**Meditation Garden**

**Sage-leaf mullein, *Phlomis tuberosa* 'Bronze Flamingo'**. Whorls of bell-shaped pink or lavender flowers surround the upright stems of this herbaceous perennial, which can reach 4' with age. Profuse blooms occur from late spring to mid-summer and the seed heads provide fall interest as well as food for birds. Use in cottage style and coastal gardens where there is sun and well-drained soil.



**Upper Fountain Garden**





Flowers of the wingnut tree

**Chinese wingnut tree, *Pterocarya stenoptera***, is a magnificent tree in **Asian Valley** that has surface roots as big as crocodiles. Despite these humps and its relation to the walnut tree, peonies and azaleas can grow beneath the huge crown. Right now, it is magical underneath the pendulous flowers that drop up to 20” from its branches. These will form the nut/fruit – with wings, hence its name – that fly off the tree in the fall. All you need to grow this carefree tree is space.



Asian Valley near the Tea House



*Iris ensata* ‘Oriental Classic’ in the lower Asian Valley

+**Iris**. Named for the Greek goddess of the rainbow, irises come in a variety of colors, color combinations and sizes. We have over 200 species throughout the Garden which are native to habitats across the entire world. *Iris cristata*, currently blooming in the West Island Garden, is native to the Northeastern USA. This dwarf crested iris typically grows to 3” - 6” with flowers borne on very short stems, thus appearing stemless.



*Iris cristata* in the West Island Garden



Flowers of the fringe tree

+**Fringe tree, *Chionanthus virginicus***, is an outstanding small deciduous understory tree. The name translates as “snow flower”, an excellent description of the fragrant fluffy white flowers that cover the ends of each branch. Slow growers with a spreading rounded habit, fringe trees mature at 12-20’, perfect for your yard. In late autumn, female trees produce blue-black fruit shaped like olives that ripen and are consumed by countless birds. The yellow fall leaves complete the perfect picture.



Between the Lotus Bridge & entrance to the West Island Garden



Joan Van Arnam Walk in Flagler Garden

**Deutzia, *Deutzia gracilis***, is a lovely early blooming shrub for sun or shade. Racemes of tiny white bell-shaped flowers are dotted along arching stems. *D.* ‘Nikko’, a compact form with dark green leaves and burgundy fall color, edges the pathway near the Tea House. *D.* ‘Chardonnay Pearls’<sup>®</sup> with its electric chartreuse leaves lights up a nook at the start of the Joan Van Arnam Walk (see photos). Low maintenance and drought tolerant once established, it’s a spring Bright Spot.



Flowers of *Deutzia* ‘Chardonnay Pearls’<sup>®</sup>



Flower of the hardy orchid

**Hardy orchid, *Bletilla striata***, is an easy-to-grow terrestrial orchid that is native to Japan and China. Hardy in USDA Zones 6-10, the buds open to reveal pinky-purple blooms that resemble tiny cattleya orchids. After the flowers fade, the stiff, pleated leaves are a pleasing background throughout summer. *Bletilla* prefers moist soils and partial shade and will spread by creeping rhizomes, naturalizing over time into a tidy clump.



Along the Woodland Walk