

# BRIGHT SPOTS

## CURRENT GARDEN HIGHLIGHTS

June 24, 2024

### + Virginia Native Plant

Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden is celebrating forty years of growing this year and, like humans often do, it is approaching this milestone with a sense of renewal and revitalization, hence the theme “Flourish”. There are four unique displays celebrating this theme: the Turtle in the Fountain Garden; the Arch at the Monet bridge, the Victorian interpretation in the Grace Arents Garden, and the “Wavy Walk” in the Children’s Garden. As the hot and steamy weather persists, take a stroll along the Flagler Garden’s shady pathways. Forty years of growth has turned this formerly sunny perennial garden into a very shady space – especially the Woodland Walk where you can truly appreciate the power of large leafy trees to reduce the temperature of the air.



Shrub in full sun outside of the Healing Garden

**Chaste tree, *Vitex agnus-castus* ‘Shoal Creek’.** You can’t miss the large clusters of fragrant blue-violet flowers on this Mediterranean native. Blooming late in the season, it is a valuable nectar source for bees, butterflies and hummingbirds. When bruised, the grayish-green leaves emit a spicy sage-like aroma that repels deer. *Vitex* leaves and fruits have a long history in folk medicine and chemical analysis shows 20+ chemicals with potential medical use. Easy-to-grow, vitex can become invasive so prune heavily in winter, or just cut to the ground. It will grow back quickly!



A close-up of the *Vitex* flowers



Single blossom overlooking the Rose Garden

**Giant Orienpet lily, *Lilium* ‘Anastasia’,** is a hybrid produced by crossing the large and fragrant oriental lilies with vigorous, sturdy trumpet lilies. These early blooming lilies are noted for their two-toned flowers the size of dinner plates and their gracefully recurving, waxy petals - a dazzler for the back of the border. Orienpet lilies can reach 6-8ft when established in well-drained soil and may have 20 or more flowers that bloom early- to late-summer. Be forewarned, the plant is toxic to cats (though not for dogs). **Fountain Garden**



Large planting along the Main Garden Walk



Big swath of plants in Flagler Garden by the lawn

**Montbretia, *Crococsmia* × ‘Lucifer’,** is a native of South Africa but grows very well in USDA Zones 6-9. The numerous fans of red tubular flowers open from the base towards the tip of the pedicel, all along stems that arch above wide, pleated foliage. Exotic in the garden and lasting as a cut flower. In sun or part-shade, it’s a carefree deciduous perennial whose corms can be divided & shared in the spring. Attracts hummingbirds ... and sometimes spider mites. **Flagler Garden**



The multiple florets on the end of a stem





A pollinating bee is attracted to this blossom

+ **Cup plant, *Silphium perfoliatum***. The genus name of this native perennial refers to the resinous sap used by Native Americans as a chewing gum to freshen breath and prevent nausea. The square stems appear to grow through the leaf, hence the species name. The “cup” that results from the leaves hugging the stem will catch rain, a boon for thirsty birds. Seeds are eaten by goldfinches, nectar attracts bees, wasps, butterflies, and various plant parts are used for nesting. **Throughout the Garden**



The large planting in Flagler Garden



The living arch over the Monet Bridge in Flagler Garden

**Flourish Arch.** In 1993, when the Flagler Garden was originally designed and planted, it was a full sun garden. Over the years, as the plantings have matured, the space has morphed into a largely shaded oasis. Pockets of seasonal interest are linked by a lazy meandering stream. The arch at the Monet Bridge has been planted to shine a light on the beauty of shade loving plants. Look for tuberous begonia, maidenhair fern, *Carex*, *Hosta* ‘Wrinkle in Time’ and *Heuchera* ‘Bronze Wave’.



A container filled with the tuberous begonias that highlight the arch



A blossom with the developing seed head

**Lotus, *Nelumbo nucifera*** ‘Mrs. Perry D. Slocum’ is blooming along the north bank of Sydnor Lake. The fragrant double blossoms open deep pink, fading to creamy yellow over 3 days. The large blooms can be 12” across. The striking seed heads, a favorite of floral designers wanting to add dramatic flair to their arrangements, grow larger as they mature. Lotus tubers and seeds are edible and were included in the diet of Native Americans.



Emerging blooms along the bank of Sydnor Lake by the Cherry Tree Walk



A large group of *Acanthus* on the Cherry Tree Walk outside of the Children’s Garden

**Bear’s breeches, *Acanthus***. This architectural plant, native to dry sites in the Mediterranean, forms mounds of deeply scalloped green leaves, the shape of which is the basis for the classic Corinthian column motif. In Greek mythology, Acantha was a nymph who resisted Apollo’s advances and was turned into a plant as punishment – but a pretty one! A question is: from where did the common name derive? Deer resistant leaf clumps are topped with tall flower spikes of purple and white hooded flowers.



The purple bracts form “hoods” over the white flower petals



Do you see the black stem?

***Hydrangea macrophylla*** ‘Nigra’ is a real showstopper with its blue mophead blooms...but what really makes it stand out are the purplish-black stems that provide a wonderful contrast with the blooms and foliage. Easy to grow! Be sure to give it plenty of space (5’x5’), some shade and plenty of water if planted in full sun. The blooms can be either blue (acidic soil) or pink (alkaline soil) depending on the pH of the soil.



Margaret Streb Conifer Garden

# **BRIGHT SPOTS**

## CURRENT GARDEN HIGHLIGHTS

June 24, 2024