

# BRIGHT SPOTS

## CURRENT GARDEN HIGHLIGHTS

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**LEWIS  
GINTER**  
BOTANICAL  
GARDEN

### + Virginia Native Plant

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Spring is bursting forth in Richmond, and the “bright spots” of forsythia and quince are seen in almost every yard. The lush growth has home gardeners reaching for their pruners – perhaps to carry some branches inside to brighten living spaces, or to keep the shrub from crowding out its neighbors. Before trimming, please take note of the plant’s natural habit. Neither shrub should be groomed into a straight sided, flat-topped imitation of a boxwood. Forsythia should spray like a yellow fountain, graceful wands of gold. Quince has a more geometric branching pattern, but it is still best to allow its branches some freedom of “motion.”



An elegant variety with ruffled peach cups inside bright white petals  
George Bragdon Garden

**Daffodils, *Narcissus***, the quintessential sign of spring, are in full bloom throughout the Garden. The Garden is home to about 270+ varieties of daffodils that bloom between February and May. Today, there are over 32,000 named cultivars, broken down into 13 categories based on features of petals, cup shape and size. To grow daffodils, plant the bulbs in the fall to a depth 3 times the size of the bulb, in a sunny location. Once the blooms have faded, allow the foliage to yellow before cutting to the ground, usually about 6 weeks.



A swath of daffodils with white ruffled cups and eyes of creamy yellow  
East Fountain Garden



*S. japonica* ‘NCSX1’ Double Play® Candy Corn® located at the Robins Visitor Center Rear

**Spirea, *Spiraea japonica* ‘NCSX1’ Double Play® Candy Corn® and *Spiraea thunbergii* ‘Ogon’.** Double Play Candy Corn is a compact shrub with color bursts! Spring starts with apple red leaves that turn gold. Early summer brings reddish-purple flowers, and the leaves turn orange in the fall. ‘Ogon’ baby’s breath spirea is upright with willowy branches that bear tiny white flowers before its golden leaves appear in spring. In partial shade, it appears to be chartreuse. Both deciduous shrubs are deer resistant and care-free.



*Spiraea thunbergii* ‘Ogon’ Baby’s breath spirea found in Asian Valley



Brightening an overcast day in Asian Valley

**Japanese maple, *Acer palmatum* ‘Katsura’.** While some maples have barely begun to leaf out, this bright spot jumped the gun. Planted in 1995, it has reached its mature height of at least 12’. The palmate leaves of this understory tree will turn a bright green in summer and then colorful in autumn. Now you can view the red flowers in umbels; these later form seeds within the winged samaras that will help them on their flight to find suitable soil for germination. **Asian Valley**



The red flowers among the early yellow leaves





Weeping winter flowering cherry, *Prunus subhirtella* var. *pendula* in Flagler Garden

**Cherry trees** have some of the most iconic spring blossoms and the beautiful Yoshino cherry trees, *P. × yedoensis*, are the main show around Lake Sydnor. 30-40' tall with lovely, fragrant white flowers. *P. subhirtella* var. *pendula*, the winter blooming weeping cherry on the Flagler lawn, is a naturally occurring hybrid with non-fragrant flowers on cascading branches. Plant either as a specimen or in a group and you can have your own Cherry Blossom Festival.



Yoshino cherry trees, *Prunus × yedoensis* around Sydnor Lake



*Magnolia × soulangeana*  
Saucer magnolia in Flagler Garden

**Deciduous magnolias.** Our numerous deciduous magnolias are in bloom, strikingly beautiful as the large, colorful, & sometimes fragrant flowers are unhampered by foliage. Most have been hybridized (since 1820) to breed early flowers resistant to frost, while retaining their majestic form and carefree nature. Magnolias are one of the first angiosperms (plants that flower & fruit) to appear on earth and their pollinators derive from ancient beetles.



*Magnolia* 'Goldfinch' in Flagler Garden



Get up close to these bright giant snowflakes

**Summer snowflake, *Leucojum aestivum*,** can be found throughout the Garden with its nodding bell-shaped flowers atop the stem in mid spring. Each flower (usually in a group of 2-5) has three petals that are tipped in green. Grown from a bulb, it is tolerant of many soil types and can withstand a soggy soil. They are perfect for growing around trees and shrubs or planted in mass for a springtime show!



Giant snowflake found in large groups around Asian Valley and Flagler Garden



*Rhododendron* 'Dawn's Early Light' found along the Crape Myrtle Walk – near Arents Garden

***Rhododendron* 'Dawn's Early Light'** is a woody, understory shrub that most would recognize as an azalea. All azaleas are in the rhododendron family, but not all rhododendrons are azaleas. Avoid planting in locations with harsh afternoon sun that can cause scorching. Once established in acidic, well-drained soil, it's low maintenance. Bright yellow, tubular flowers offer nectar to early pollinators, enhancing the biodiversity of your garden.



A close-up of this early blooming azalea



A close-up of the pale blue flowers and rich green spotted leaves

**Lungwort, *Pulmonaria officinalis*,** is an attractive small plant that does well in shady, moist, well drained locations. Its green leaves are spotted with white, brightening its surroundings. Its clusters of delicate blooms open pale pink but mature to blue so different color blossoms may be seen on a single plant. In earlier times the leaves were thought to resemble diseased lungs and thus assumed to be a treatment for lung conditions, hence its rather unattractive common name.



Lungwort, *Pulmonaria* 'Ocupol' Opal – one of several plants in the Streb Conifer Garden