

BRIGHT SPOTS

CURRENT GARDEN HIGHLIGHTS

April 28, 2025

**LEWIS
GINTER**
BOTANICAL
GARDEN

+ Virginia Native Plant

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You may have noticed the recent activity in the parking lots and perimeter beds at the Garden. We were delighted to spend time with Hilary, Horticulture Section Leader in charge of this eye-popping twenty-acre section of cultivated space, as she shared details of her work and cast a vision of future improvements as time and resources permit. Selectively removing invasive plants or those never adequately documented, she's added more trees for shade and some new magnificent conifers. With color as a through line, she uses grasses and perennials to bring structure to beds that will be augmented with a changing display of seasonal plants. No longer a pass-through space, do take the time to linger and admire the beauty and creativity in these areas.



The flowers of the perennial plant, thrift

Thrift, *Armeria pseudoarmeria*, is a showy herbaceous perennial that blooms either white or pink from spring to summer with balloon-like flower heads and broadleaf evergreen leaves. Pictured is *Armeria* Dreameria® 'Sweet Dreams'. Thrift can be propagated by dividing the clumps and planting them in dry, sandy soil with good drainage. The plant is adaptable and thrives in partial to direct sun and grows 6" to 1' tall. Note that thrift does not tolerate foot traffic but attracts butterflies and is truly a garden delight!



A group of 'Sweet Dreams' in parking lot B



Tall bearded iris 'Just Call Me' found in one of the beds in parking lot B

+Iris. Named for the Greek goddess of the rainbow, irises come in a dizzying array of colors and color combinations. The Garden has over 200 species, including some that like sun or full shade, prefer dry meadows or wetlands, have large flowers or small. There are even re-blooming irises such as *Iris* 'Just Call Me' and *Iris* 'Coronation of David' that grace the garden in spring and again in early fall. Each bloom has 3 upright standards and 3 pendant falls. Native habitats cross the world, including VA, calling for bees & butterflies.



Tall bearded iris 'Coronation of David' located in parking lot B



Brightening a pot in the front of the Robins Visitor Center

Yellow trailing oregano, a cultivar of *Origanum vulgare*, joins a long list of savory herbs in this mint family. Home to Europe and Asia, this woody perennial has naturalized here and is easily grown in sandy, poor (unfertilized) soils. Besides adding flavor to "Mediterranean" dishes and color to the garden, oregano reportedly has a wide range of health benefits because of its anti-inflammatory, antioxidant nature.



Close-up of this yellow oregano



This dwarf form is growing at the front of the Robins Visitor Center

Hinoki cypress, *Chamaecyparis obtusa*, 'Nana'. A valued conifer from Japan, the wood of this long-lived tree is very strong, and its oils are used in aromatherapy to promote respiratory health. It is distinctive because sprays of scale-like leaves fan out to form whorls, or "clouds". The tree also has attractive reddish, shaggy bark. A dwarf cultivar is best for a landscape as the species can grow to 75-ft.



The obtuse angle of the whorl of leaves forming a "cloud"



The bomb-type of peony: 'Eden's Perfume'

Peony, *Paeonia lactiflora*. The traditional floral symbol of China, these herbaceous perennials with their lovely fragrance and large blooms are a great choice in any garden. Colors range from pure white to deep crimson, in single, anemone, double & bomb forms. Once the blooms are past, the foliage makes an attractive backdrop for colorful summer annuals. In the language of flowers, peonies are an omen of good fortune, healing or love. Robins Visitors' Center - Front



One of many groups of *P. lactiflora* in the front of the RVC



An emerging voodoo lily flower on the left side of the entrance gate

Dragon arum, *Dracunculus vulgaris*. This Greek plant's most unusual flower features a reddish-purple leaf (spathe) that protects the long, reproductive flowering parts at the base of the purple spadix. The common name comes from the leaves' resemblance to dragons' feet. Pollinators, such as blow flies and carrion beetles, are attracted by the noxious smell. Berries form after pollination. Plant in warm rich soil in full sun. All plant parts are poisonous and have a foul odor. Beware!



An open flower on the right side of the Garden's entrance gate



A close-up view of the flowers of the red buckeye along the Garden's entrance road

+Red buckeye, *Aesculus pavia*, is a deciduous clump forming shrub that will grow 10-20' tall with shiny dark leaves. Its flowers occur in upright red to orange-red panicles with narrow tubular flowers that bloom in spring and are very attractive to the ruby-throated hummingbird. In the fall, the leaves begin to decline and the plant develops seed capsules that contain 3 seeds that are poisonous and are avoided by most wildlife.



Aesculus pavia, red buckeye, as seen in Flagler Garden from the Lotus Bridge



In the bright light it's difficult to see the sprawling nature of this species. Go see it in person in parking lot B

Cream wild indigo, *Baptisia bracteata*, is considered a prairie plant, although it is also native to parts of the Eastern US. This plant prefers a dry soil, part to full sun and blooms in April with pale yellow flowers. The flowers yield to blackish seed pods in the fall - sought after by floral arrangers. It is one of the first prairie plants to bloom, provides crucial food for early awakening queen bumblebees, and is the larval host to several butterflies.



Very pretty flowers and the bees are happy to find them