

BRIGHT SPOTS

A SELF-GUIDED TOUR OF CURRENT GARDEN HIGHLIGHTS

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+ Virginia Native Plant

<p>Scan QR code for a digital copy</p> 	<p>Julius Caesar had reason to fear the month of March, and we, as gardeners, need to be vigilant as well. The weather is balmy and garden centers are displaying blossoming plants of every kind. Even the most cautious of us find it impossible to resist the urge to plant, but the actual frost-free date in the Richmond area is April 23rd! What does this mean? It means that most likely your tender plants will come through unscathed, but that there is a chance (possibly 20%) that they will need to be protected. Paying attention to your local forecast is your best defense against an unfortunate outcome. Choosing some sturdy frost-resistant species like pansies will provide cheery blooms with less risk. Enjoy them now along the garden's main pathways!</p>	
 <p>Habitat piles can be messy or ... Either way insects stay cozy until they emerge in 50-degree temps</p>	<p>After the frigid weeks we just escaped, when the first warm days arrive it can be oh so tempting to start spring cleanup. Wait! Slow down. A lot of critters are still in winter nap mode and are not ready to be disturbed. Brush piles, made of fallen branches, stems and loose leaf litter, provide essential protection from cold, wind and predators for insects as well as small mammals and reptiles. Natural shelter can be scarce in urban gardens, and your pile could give wildlife a safe space.</p>	 <p>... or elegant!</p>
 <p><i>Narcissus</i> 'February Gold' brightens the morning in the George Bragdon Garden</p>	<p>Daffodil, <i>Narcissus</i> bulbs were first brought to Virginia by British colonists to remind them of home. The plants thrived and spread throughout the Northern Neck. In 1890, a local woman paid children 10 cents for every 100 they picked. She then packed and shipped thousands of blooms by steamboat to Baltimore, thus cementing Gloucester, VA as the "Daffodil Capital of America." Early, mid and late varieties ensure weeks of these cheery flowers in the garden.</p>	 <p><i>N.</i> 'Cum Laude' is a top bloomer at the edge of the Woodland Walk. Ruffled petals & apricot color</p>
 <p><i>Magnolia</i> 'Spring Petticoats' is just opening at the top of the Garden Walk West Side</p>	<p>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.</p>	 <p><i>M. stellata</i>, star magnolia, is stunning against a clear blue sky in Asian Valley. Spring is here!</p>



There are several *Prunus* 'Okame' trees in Asian Valley, showing off their light pink blooms

Flowering Cherry Trees, *Prunus*. No need to drive to DC to see cherry blossoms; these lovely trees are bursting open at the Garden. Small, deciduous, with rosy, pink, mildly fragrant flowers and good cold hardiness, these trees tolerate part shade but flower best in full sun. *Prunus* 'Okame' received the Royal Horticulture Society Award of Garden Merit and *Prunus sargentii* is a larval host plant to the Eastern Tiger Swallowtail butterfly.



Bees love the darker pink *P. sargentii* 'Columnaris' in Lucy Payne Minor Garden



The fragrant blossoms of the paperbush are throughout the Garden

Paperbush, *Edgeworthia chrysantha*, is heralding spring as it sports clusters of tiny cream and gold trumpets dancing from dark bare branches. When fully open, the blooms fill the air with intoxicating fragrance, alerting winter pollinators to a feasting opportunity. The inner bark was used to make paper in its native China, hence the common name. This shrub does well in Virginia when provided with some shade and rich soil.



Here is a proud inflorescence that has reached its peak



P. japonica 'Variegata' at the base of the Garden Walk East has opened its raspberry buds

Lily of the valley shrub, *Pieris japonica*, is a broadleaf evergreen shrub, native to China and Japan. In early spring it provides early foragers with a source of pollen in its pendulous chains of flowers. These tiny bell-shaped flowers emerge with a hint of blush and then open to white or pink, depending on the variety. This shrub can grow anywhere from 2' to 10', so choose the one that fits your space. Check our Garden Explorer for locations of the many specimens.



In LP Minor Garden, the white *P. japonica* is full of dangling flowers that bees seek



The aroma from this single shrub can be sensed from far away. Catch this beauty while you can

Winter daphne, *Daphne odora*, is a wonderful addition to the winter garden. Blooming in February and March, the flowers have a wonderful fragrance and are also enjoyed by pollinators. Although a little fickle to grow, it's worth a try if you have a partly shady location with well-drained soil or a container filled with a light potting mixture. The small shrub is native to Asia and is evergreen with dark green foliage, often variegated. It is resistant to deer, as all parts of the plant are poisonous.



Follow your nose to find this shrub by the arbor in Dot's Garden along the Woodland Walk in Flagler Garden



This striking tree, and 2 smaller ones, are located on either side of the Cherry Tree Walk

Cornelian cherry dogwood, *Cornus mas*. A member of the dogwood family, this small tree produces rounded bright-yellow flower clusters on short stalks. The common name refers to the fruit, which is a bright red, resembling the color of the gemstone carnelian or that of a cherry. It is edible, though tart and can be used to make preserves. Native to Europe and SW Asia, the genus name (*Cornus*) comes from the Latin "male horn" and refers to the tree's dense strong wood.



Now in flower, and before the red fruit forms, the tree provides nectar for hungry bees