

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>Richmond is often referred to as a “river” city, but at this time of year we might think of it as an “azalea” city. The vivid, colorful blooms enliven foundation plantings everywhere! A visitor could be forgiven for assuming that these are native to the region, but only the Florida flame azalea (see below) is a North American native. Most examples of the genus <i>Rhododendron</i> were first brought to the west from Asia by the 19th C. plant explorers, Joseph Hooker, George Forrest, and Robert Fortune. They have been propagated and hybridized by plantsmen ever since. LGBG grows 379 species of <i>Rhododendron</i>, of which 200 are classified as azaleas. See how many you can find!</p>	
 <p>This Florida azalea (<i>R. austrinum</i>) is a-light in the North Entrance Terrace</p>	<p>Florida fame azaleas, <i>Rhododendron austrinum</i>, are some of the deciduous azaleas that bloom just as its leaves are forming. Native to the SE, south of N.C., these tall woodland shrubs produce fragrant clusters of blooms that attract hummingbirds, butterflies, moths and bees. While prone to diseases, if planted in well-drained, organic, & moist soils, the shrubs can remain healthy and grow up to 15’ tall. These bright spots don’t bloom long – now is the time to see them.</p>	 <p>R. austrinum ‘Escatawpa’ brightens even a sunny day in Flagler Garden</p>
 <p>Tall bearded <i>Iris</i> ‘Queen Dorothy’ stands tall at the steps of the Sunken Garden</p>	<p><i>Iris</i>. A perennial favorite, the iris is known for its striking, fan-shaped leaves and complex, regal blooms. Named after the Greek goddess of the rainbow, it features three upright petals called “standards” and three drooping “falls”. These hardy plants thrive in sunny gardens, offering a spectrum of colors from deep violet to golden yellow. Their unique structure and reliable spring arrival make them a symbolic staple of elegance and hope in any landscape.</p>	 <p>Miniature + <i>Iris cristata</i> plants are found in West Island and are native along the eastern US</p>
 <p>This species, and also the feather-leaved <i>A. hubrichtii</i>, are scattered around the Garden. Reliable perennial for your garden</p>	<p>+Bluestar, <i>Amsonia tabernaemontana</i> ‘Storm Cloud’, features near black stems clad with silver-veined dark green leaves that lighten to olive green by summer. Light periwinkle-blue, star-shaped flowers bloom abundantly from late spring to early summer. The genus name honors Dr. John Amson (1698-1765), an English physician and amateur botanist who lived and worked in Williamsburg, VA during the colonial period. Blooms attract butterflies and other insect pollinators. 2026 PHS Gold Medal winner!</p>	 <p>Note the wide leaves of this <i>A. tabernaemontana</i> species. They will turn a pretty yellow color in the autumn</p>



***Paeonia lactifolia* 'Honey Gold'** has the "bomb" form & is opening in the Meditation Garden

Peonies, *Paeonia*, are just beginning to bloom so you are in luck! In fact, peonies symbolize good luck ... as well as prosperity, beauty, long marriage, honor, a happy life. As the plants can live for 100-years, it's no wonder that they represent all good things. Growing in over 6 forms, from single to full-double, they lure bees with their scent and many colors – colors that fade as the blossoms lose their fertility. Plant in the fall to reap glorious benefits of flowers and handsome foliage for years to come.



This un-named peony in Asian Valley has the "single" form, which is the most fertile type



'John Clayton' grows at both ends of the arbor in the Central Garden and also in Morton Native Garden

+ **Trumpet honeysuckle, *Lonicera sempervirens* f. *sulphurea* 'John Clayton'**, was discovered in a 17th-century church yard in Gloucester, VA in 1991. The fragrant buttery-yellow blooms attract butterflies, bees & hummingbirds. A heavy bloomer in early spring, it reblooms until fall, after which its red berries support birds. Its drought & high salt tolerance make it a good choice for xeric and coastal gardens. It can grow on a trellis or as a ground cover on sloped land.



Bees pick up pollen from the protruding stamens as they struggle to access nectar



The blooms first open at the base of the stem, leaving plenty of time for all buds to mature

Yellow Wild Indigo, *Baptisia sphaerocarpa*, 'Screamin' Yellow', is a robust, lupine-like perennial native to Texas. It is prized for its spiky racemes of deep yellow, pea-shaped flowers that rise above dense, clover-like blue-green foliage. Beyond its spring beauty, it produces ornamental black seed pods that add winter interest. This drought-tolerant plant is a pollinator favorite, especially for bees, and adds a stately, structural presence to any sunny border.



Located in the Fountain Garden East, these deep, tap-rooted plants are there to stay



Low, cascading *Deutzia crenata* 'Nikko' along the path towards the Tea House in Asian Valley

Slender deutzia, *Deutzia gracilis*, a native of mountainous Japan, is named for an 18th century Dutch patron of plant hunting (Deutz) and its slender graceful stems ('gracilis' in Latin). 'Nikko' has star-shaped double-white blooms and deep-green foliage that turns burgundy in the fall. 'Chardonnay Pearls' has single star-shaped blooms and its bright yellow-green foliage stands out year-round. Their blooms give pollinators food mid-spring. Both cultivars are deer resistant, non-invasive, and best used in a layered landscape.



Deutzia gracilis 'Duncan' Chardonnay Pearls®, next to the Joan Van Arnum Walk in Flagler, is upright & a bright accent



Looking down from Rob's Garden towards the Monet Bridge, we see *Tiarella* adding a contrast to other woodland plants

+**Foam flower, *Tiarella cordifolia***, is a small, delicate perennial with burgundy veined, heart shaped leaves that are evergreen in mild winters. In the spring, pink tinged buds turn into spikes of creamy white flowers held on erect stems above the foliage. Spread by runners, dense clumps can form a wonderful ground cover in a woodland garden. Members of the same family, *Tiarellas* are super companions with *Heucheras* in a shade garden. North Carolina Wildflower of the Year in 1986.



Paired with other shade plants (golden ragwort, ferns, 'Southern Comfort' coral bells), foam flower brightens the scene