

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>Our Conservatory is open and it's travel time! Take an immersive journey through Earth's diverse plant biomes; each is distinct in climate, flora, and plant adaptations. Wander through the stark beauty of the desert where plants survive intense heat and less than 10 inches of rain a year. Then, go to the Jeanette Lipman Mediterranean House where familiar and strange plants illustrate survival for wide seasonal moisture changes and even wildfires. Next, head to the tropics where water is plentiful, but sunlight is precious. Competition is fierce: large leaves, climbing vines, and epiphytic habitats maximize sunlight. As a finale, in the Alice & Bill Goodwin Subtropical House, see how butterflies and flowering plants have adapted to co-exist and maximize survival.</p>	
 <p>There are several varieties of plants with bright red bracts and the tiny yellow flowers deep inside.</p>	<p>Bromeliads. Strappy, waxy leaves of varying bright hues and patterns characterize members of the Bromeliad family. Adapted to a wide range of environments, they're found in tropical rainforests, the rocky soil of the Andes mountains and on seashores. Many are epiphytes, growing on tree branches; they capture moisture from the air. Others use their basal rosette to collect and store water. Bright modified leaves (bracts) are beacons for the insects, birds, and bats that pollinate the small flowers within. Dome House</p>	 <p>While groups of bromeliads such as <i>Neoregelia</i> 'Fireball' dominate, Spanish moss also is in the family</p>
 <p>The globe shape of the golden barrel cactus (<i>Echinocactus grusonii</i>) efficiently preserves water.</p>	<p>Cacti. Here are two plants that look very different but have similar adaptations that enable them to live in the tough desert environment. Vertical ribs allow plants to expand when full of water & contract when drier. Sharp spines reflect sunlight, give the fleshy tissues shade, and <i>definitely</i> keep animals & people away. Shallow roots soak up flash-flood water. Although sunlight is absorbed in the daytime, a specialized type of photosynthesis has evolved for gases and water to be exchanged at night when less water evaporates. Desert House</p>	 <p>The wooly, fine hairs on silver torch cactus (<i>Cleistocactus strausii</i>) reflect sunlight.</p>
 <p>The canopy from the branching green leaves cools the soil beneath.</p>	<p>Velvet mesquite, <i>Neltuma velutina</i>. Who would think plants with leaves could grow in deserts? They can because they, too, have made adaptations to life in the hot sun. Mesquites have taproots that reach the water table, as well as surface roots. Their young, green branches grow thorns to deter herbivores. Because the plant is in the legume family, it can fix nitrogen to help enrich the nutrient-poor soil. Desert House</p>	 <p>Slender leaves reduce water evaporation and even fall off when the weather is too hot (drought-deciduous).</p>



“Nature’s Skylight” – closeup of the surface of the *Lithops* plant; its taproot extends to 6’ long

Living stones, *Lithops*, are endemic to S. Africa and evolved to survive drought and predators. Camouflaged as surrounding stones, most of the plant grows underground to minimize sun and heat exposure with the top of each bulbous leaf “windowed” to allow sunlight to penetrate deep into the plant body for photosynthesis. One daisy-like flower emerges each year, producing seeds that open when splashed by rain. **Lipman Mediterranean House**



Each plant can live for 25 years in the harsh wild or 40-50 years under cultivation.



This colorful alcove of plants features many varieties that may be new to you.

Pelargoniums, native to S. Africa, are popularly called “garden geraniums” but differ from hardy geraniums with asymmetrical flowers & cold intolerance. Scented-leaf varieties release fragrant oils (rose, mint, citrus) to repel herbivores. Adapted for summer drought, hairy leaves reduce water loss; stems & leaves store water, and plants go dormant. Thick, moist leaves resist igniting during wildfires and the roots easily resprout if burned. Fragrant oils are used in perfumery and culinary flavoring. **Lipman Mediterranean House**



Pelargonium asperum – a rose & citrus-scented species



Monkey cups entice flying and crawling insects with fragrance, bright colors, and sweet nectar.

Carnivorous Plants. Because these plants typically live in damp, low-nutrient soil, they have adapted by catching insects for their nutritional needs. Both the **monkey cups, *Nepenthes***, and the **Mexican butterwort, *Pinguicula moranensis***, have a substance to lure in the insect, and then a digestive enzyme to extract the nitrogen from the insect for nourishment. Located together near the pond. Many of these plants can be grown as houseplants, so give them a try! **Tropical House.**



Succulent leaves of butterwort are covered in tiny hairs that secrete mucilage to lure & trap insects.



Cacao trees are vulnerable to pests, so the Garden is vigilant in using best cultural practices.

Cacao, *Theobroma cacao*, is a tropical, evergreen, understory tree whose name means “food of the gods” in Greek. Flowers and pods grow along the tree bark, an adaptation known as cauliflory, making it easier for pollinators to reach the blooms and for animals to climb the trunk and eat the pods. The large, heavy, football shaped pods are filled with bitter-tasting edible seeds encased in a sweet, white pulp. Seeds are removed, fermented, dried, husked and then refined into chocolate that we all love. **Tropical House**



Cauliflorous flowers grow along the trunk of the tree.



The curved white flower shape keeps nectar from being diluted by heavy rains.

Golden shrimp plant, *Pachystachys lutea*. Native to the tropical lowlands of Central & South America, this evergreen shrub blooms year-round in climates above 55 °– 60 °F. The bright-yellow structures that form the “shrimp” are actually modified leaves (bracts) that act as a visual beacon for pollinators for 4 to 6 weeks. In contrast, the white two-lipped narrow flowers last for only a few days and emerge sequentially, providing a constant nectar source. **Goodwin Subtropical House**



Only long tongued hummingbirds and butterflies can reach the nectar deep inside the white flower. The yellow bracts make a good landing pad.