

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>Food insecurity is growing in communities across the nation and Richmond is no exception. One of our newest gardens, planted as an extension of the Conservatory renovation, is the Kroger Working Courtyard. Adjacent to the Desert Wing, this garden expands and rounds out the produce we grow each year for Feed More, our community food bank. It includes a mini-orchard of dwarf peach & apple trees, strawberries, blueberries, thornless raspberries, gooseberries, asparagus, and fennel. Growing food crops is not only healthy but many are beautiful additions to the landscape. Stroll down the Main Garden Walk and find parsley and bronze fennel, host plants for Virginia's native swallowtail butterflies.</p>	
 <p>This 'Liberty' apple appears solo until others arrive.</p>	<p>Apple, <i>Malus 'Liberty'</i> is an edible apple and like most apples, does not grow well on its own root stock! Most apple varieties are grafted. Espalier is an ancient horticultural technique that trains fruit trees to grow against a wall, fence, or free-standing trellis. 'Liberty' should be grouped in a sunny location with other apple varieties to facilitate pollination. Also, pears and figs are good to espalier, yielding a beautiful art form and delicious edibles!</p>	 <p>Four different apple varieties are grafted to the apple root stock in the Four Seasons Garden.</p>
 <p>The cardoon's thistle tops the plant in the Meditation Garden.</p>	<p>Cardoon, <i>Cynara cardunculus</i>. This perennial, architectural plant features deeply-lobed, silvery leaves, and tall stalks topped with a bluish-purple thistle. Although related to the globe artichoke, cardoon's flower buds are less appetizing. Instead, the stalks - which resemble celery - are a culinary delicacy in the Mediterranean. Brought to America by the French and Spanish, cardoons became a staple of colonial gardens and would be a striking accent in your mixed border.</p>	 <p>Flower stalks can grow to 6' and blooms perform well in fresh or dried arrangements.</p>
 <p>Leave the spent blooms, as birds enjoy the seeds from the seed-head.</p>	<p>Coneflowers, <i>Echinacea purpurea</i>, are native to the central and eastern USA and are resistant to deer, drought (once established), heat, and humidity - a perfect plant for our Richmond gardens! The bloom consists of rays and disc flowers (tiny) that are the preferred nectar source for bees, butterflies, and beneficial insects. Medicinally the plant was used by Native American tribes to cure snake bites, wounds, and toothaches. Today it is used in herbal teas and natural remedies.</p>	 <p>In late fall, cut the stems to 12-24" so that native bees can use the hollow stems for nesting.</p>



Fruit changes from green to translucent pink (resembles a white rabbit's eye) to indigo in the Kroger Courtyard Garden.

+Rabbiteye blueberry, *Vaccinium ashei*. Native to the SE USA, this deciduous, multi-stemmed, perennial shrub is a cornerstone of residential and commercial agriculture in warm temperate regions. Year-round it's a beautiful addition to a garden, with leaves, fruit, and even stems changing colors. Humans value the fruits' nutritional and bioactive compounds that improve metabolic health and the heart. Ecologically, it provides nectar, food, and habitat for insects, birds, rabbits, and deer.



Different cultivars fruit at different times, e.g. 'Climax' (early season) and 'Powderblue' (late season).



Thyme grows in many beds throughout the garden.

Herbs. 🎵 Parsley, Sage, Rosemary, and Thyme are all well represented in the Garden. Herbs are soft-stemmed plants with flavorful leaves that are rich in vitamins, antioxidants, and minerals. They add color, flavor, and aroma to dishes and can be used in medicines or as aromatics. Thyme makes a spectacular ground cover. Parsley and dill are favorite host plants for swallowtail butterflies. As these plants flower and go to seed, the blooms are airy additions to flower arrangements.



Dill shines in the Children's Garden.



Flowers attract butterflies, pollinators, and hummingbirds.

Montbretia, *Crocosmia*, makes a statement in the garden with bright-red flowers that open at the bottom of the spray first, and then continue from the bottom upwards. The flowers are often grown commercially and enjoyed by florists. This perennial grows from corms but can also spread by rhizomes. After the blooms fade, cut back the flower stems, but leave the foliage until it naturally withers, as it will provide energy to the corm to ensure blooms next year.



Growing in beds in Flagler, *Crocosmia* makes a great thriller in a cut-flower arrangement.



The superior flower cultivar, 'Mrs. Perry D. Slocum' (1964) features a 3-day color change and intense sweet aroma.

Sacred lotus, *Nelumbo nucifera*. These ancient aquatic plants have circular green leaves, up to 2' wide, that emerge above the water and can reach a height of 5'. On tall stalks, large fragrant flowers that resemble water lilies occur, primarily in shades of pink, white or yellow. All parts of the plants are edible with cultivars bred to produce large starch-rich rhizomes, high-yield nutrient seeds, or superior ornamental flowers. Stems and leaves act as veggies and salads. Often, farmers cultivate lotus in rotation with rice and vegetables. **Cherry Tree Walk.**



Lotus grows rapidly and aggressively filters excess nitrates and pollutants from water.



Fig trees provide safety-net food and nesting sites for birds.

Fig, *Ficus carica* 'Magnolia'. This multi-stemmed shrub or tree (10-30') is prized globally for its ornamental value and sweet fruit. Although the large, deeply-lobed leaves give a tropical appearance, it thrives in USDA Zones 6-9. Rich in sugar, fiber, minerals, and antioxidants, the fruit is eaten raw or dried, canned, or cooked into preserves and chutneys. Figs tolerate the high heat, poor soil, and air pollution of urban landscapes. **International Village in Children's Garden.**



Figs can be grown in containers or in the ground.