

BRIGHT SPOTS

A SELF-GUIDED TOUR OF CURRENT GARDEN HIGHLIGHTS

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**LEWIS
GINTER
BOTANICAL
GARDEN**

+ Virginia Native Plant

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Preserving Summer's Fleeting Blooms. For over four thousand years, people have preserved flowers for ceremonies, medicines, fragrances, and as keepsakes. In this issue, we feature August blooms that you can preserve for arrangements, wreaths, stationery, or crafts. Air drying works for sturdy bouquets – strip the leaves, bind with a rubber band, and hang upside down in a dark, dry, well-ventilated space. For 2-D art, press individual leaves or blooms. Sandwich them between absorbent paper (parchment, newspaper), place inside a heavy book, and add additional weight. Other botanical specimens will dry on the plant or in a vase. We hope the following examples will inspire you to try ancient techniques to create sustainable décor.

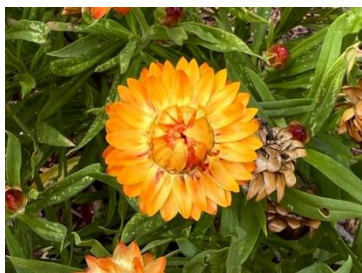


These shrubs in the Healing (Medicinal) Garden revived following last winter's ice

Eucalyptus, *Eucalyptus spp.*, is an evergreen tree or shrub native to Australia. Its aromatic leaves are filled with essential oils. To dry, hang small bundles upside down in a dark, warm, dry room for 2-3 weeks, or use a vegetable glycerin bath. Dried stems can refresh shower spaces, elevate floral arrangements, and repel insects naturally. The menthol scent enhances aromatherapy, potpourri, and the home, bringing an earthy aesthetic and calming fragrance to indoor spaces.



The silvery foliage, with its aromatic scent, brings freshness and whimsy to the Garden



As you can see, the bracts on this young blossom cover the central disk – perfect now for drying

Strawflower, *Xerochrysum bracteatum*. Strawflowers range from delicate white and pink to brilliant orange and yellow. The stiff, papery, petal-like structures are actually modified leaves (bracts) made up of dead cells and limited water. One preservation method is to harvest the flowers (no stems) on a dry, sunny day and lay them on a flat surface to dry. Be sure the bracts cover the central disk, which otherwise will turn brown. Triangle Beds & the Conservatory Mediterranean House.



Although gorgeous, this blossom is a bit too old to be dried without its central disk turning brown



Species are found along both the West and East Fountain Gardens

Stonecrop, *Hylotelephium* (formerly *Sedum*), is a standout in the fall garden. The flower heads have too much moisture now to dry successfully. Be patient! As the season progresses, watch the bright green stalks age gradually to pink and later a dark cinnamon color. Timing is everything: wait too long and late fall rains or winter frost will turn the flowers to mush. Pair with dried hydrangea, ornamental grass seed heads or eucalyptus for a beautiful fall arrangement.



Although the emerging blossoms are attractive during these early stages of maturity, wait until they turn dark dusty rose before drying



This low-growing and cleverly named *Gomphrena globosa* 'Ping Pong Lavendar' is in the Mediterranean House

Globe amaranth, *Gomphrena globosa*, fondly referred to as "everlasting" flowers, make wonderful, dried blooms. Their stiff papery bracts are ideal for drying as they retain their bright magenta, purple, pink, or white colors for years. And now is the perfect harvest time. Simply cut stems in the morning after dew evaporates, strip the foliage, secure stems with a rubber band, hang them upside down in a dark, well-ventilated room, and voila! These sweet little pompoms can be enjoyed for years.



Various cultivars of globe amaranth are in the Central Garden; this one is along the top of the Main Garden Walk



The plant is also known as "walking stick", as it stands tall and gradually walks (spreads)

Tall verbena, *Verbena bonariensis*, known for its purple top, is a striking perennial with rigid, see-through stems and flat clusters of vibrant lavender-purple flowers. To dry, cut long flower stalks when the blooms are freshly opened. Gather them into small bundles using a rubber band. Hang them upside down in a dark, warm, and well-ventilated room. Let them air-dry completely for 1 to 2 weeks until brittle. Use the stiff dried stems in tall floral arrangements and autumn crafts.



The purple flowers attract pollinators such as butterflies & hummingbirds



Following the bloom, the lotus pod, in the background, slowly changes from green to bronze

Lotus, *Nelumbo nucifera* 'Mrs. Perry D. Slocum' has flowers that are fading along the shore of Lake Sydnor now, but the real drama lies ahead. Ranging in color from tan to charcoal gray, the dried seed pods (that look like little shower heads) are highly prized by florists and crafters for the earthy element that they add to dried or fresh bouquets or autumn/winter wreaths. Fully dried and preserved, they're low maintenance and can last for years without water or sunlight.



Viewed against its green leaf, the majestic pod will be ready for cutting once the stem turns brown



This particular variety of panicle hydrangea ('Dvppinky' Pink-Winky®) is on the Cherry Tree Walk near the Minor Garden

Panicle hydrangea, *Hydrangea paniculata*, is noted for its large flower clusters, and praised for its winter hardiness, sun tolerance, and color-changing blooms. Harvest blooms in late summer or fall when they transition from pristine white to a papery feel and blush pink, green, or burgundy. Place freshly angled stems into a vase with just 1 to 2 inches of water. Let water evaporate over 2-3 weeks out of direct sunlight, allowing the blooms to dehydrate gently while remaining upright. Enjoy!



The white blossoms are beginning to turn pink as the season progresses and the flowers approach harvest stage



Rosa 'Horcogjil' At Last® is a floribunda rose that blooms all summer

Rosa. Using newly opened blossoms, trim & fluff them and then hang individually in a dark, dry, airy room until completely dry. Gently open the petals every few days as the blooms dry. To save & press individual petals & leaves, place between rag or parchment paper and weigh under heavy books for a few weeks, checking to replace the paper if it looks damp. Their color and form should remain, so you can recapture summer during winter.



Rosa 'Meiggili' Peach Drift®, is a shrub rose waiting for its color to be captured by you