

BRIGHT SPOTS

A SELF-GUIDED TOUR OF CURRENT GARDEN HIGHLIGHTS

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BOTANICAL
GARDEN**

+ Virginia Native Plant

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August in Richmond brings high temperatures and high humidity, leaving us lethargic and out of sorts; even our plants are starting to look a little tired. These shoulder seasons can be challenging for gardeners, but a quick walk around today reminds us that there are still some tried and true options that will bring bright spots to the fading Garden and new harbingers of Fall color are on the horizon. We saw fat bumblebees fueling up on nectar and the leaves of Japanese maple trees at the foot of the Asian valley garden are starting to show color. A new season will be upon us before you know it!



Native to Mexico, Central & South America, plants require 6-8 hr. of full sun and well-drained soil

Orange cosmos, *Cosmos sulphureus* ‘Sunset Orange’. Blooming from mid-summer to first frost, the daisy-like flowers provide mass color that transitions well from summer to fall. The upright herbaceous plant (3-6') has deeply divided leaves that give a feathery feel to borders, cottage gardens, or meadows. Encourage blooming by deadheading and/or pruning leggy plants. Flowers can be used in arrangements, to garnish salads, and as a source of textile dyes.



Pollinated by birds, bees, and butterflies (including the monarch), it's located at the Kelly Education Center entrance



Arching branches shelter birds; leaves are effective insect repellants; roots treat upset stomachs'

Beautyberry, *Callicarpa americana*, is just beginning its autumn display. Summer flowers have been pollinated & the resultant clusters of fruit are ripening from light green on the tips, to pink, and finally to deep fuchsia as you move down the stems. Numerous native bird species eat the fully ripened fruit – as do foxes and other small mammals. Indigenous Americans boiled them into a drink to treat colic and modern folks crush, boil & sweeten the berries for jam.



Clusters of American beautyberry fruit are larger and more deeply colored than Asian species and can be seen in the Medicinal Garden



Maximize pollinators by mixing pentas with coneflowers, milkweed, zinnias, marigolds, & salvia

Egyptian star flower, *Pentas lanceolata*. Native to eastern Africa & Arabia, this brightly colored perennial is popular world-wide as a bedding, container, or house plant. The flat-topped flower cluster makes a perfect landing pad for heavy pollinators - hummingbirds, large butterflies, and bees. Pollinators need a long beak or proboscis to reach the nectar inside the tubular star-shaped flower. In warm frost-free climates, it produces year-round nectar for pollinators!



Pentas, seen on the Main Garden Walk, are a critical food supply in pollinator gardens and wildlife restoration projects



For continuous blooms, deadheading is easy! Snap the spent flower off and save the seed for next year

Marigolds, *Tagetes*, a member of the Aster family, might just be the perfect plant! The cheery flowers come in shades of orange, yellow, red and burgundy and bloom profusely all summer until the first frost. They are adaptable to most any soil and are drought tolerant. The aromatic foliage repels garden pests, (deer, rabbits) and attracts beneficial insects (hover flies, ladybugs) making marigolds a perfect companion plant for vegetable gardens and other flowers!



Marigolds found on the Central Garden Walk attract bees, butterflies and many other pollinators



The flowers can be used as a cut flower or will hold their color if dried.

Globe amaranth, *Gomphrena globosa*, is a whimsical addition to any garden, and will bloom during the hottest weather up until the first frost. The globe shaped or clover like flowers come in shades of pink, purple and white. They prefer full sun and are drought tolerant once established, as well as clay soil tolerant and not preferred by the deer. Consider adding this annual to your flower beds or containers.



Gomphrena is enjoyed by bees, butterflies and hummingbirds along the Garden Walk



Radiant along Garden Walk East, the flowers rebloom when dead-headed & last indoors when cut

+ Brown-eyed Susan, *Rudbeckia triloba*, is a biennial that self-seeds so you can always appreciate the small, cheery flowers in early fall. Heat, drought, deer? This plant survives it all. Bees, wasps, flies & butterflies pollinate the plant without bother from pesky insects or diseases. It is a larval host plant for the silvery checkerspot butterfly and goldfinches flock to eat the seeds. Basal rosettes of leaves serve as a winter ground cover after the stems die back.



Too much of a good thing? It's simple to pull up newly self-seeded plants in the spring



This young flower is beginning its journey to maturity as the white color slowly turns a deep red

Rosa 'Meisponge' Cherry Parfait™, is an all-season grandiflora that will bloom continuously from May to October. Its large and multi-petalled (30+) flowers change color with age: emerging white with red edges and gradually maturing to red with patches of white. The dark, shiny leaves are a foil for these bright blooms that emit an old-rose fragrance attractive to birds and butterflies. It is known for its disease resistance and heat tolerance. A stunner in the Rose Garden!



It's no wonder that this rose won a prestigious All-American Rose Selections award in 2003



A small group of trees located near the entrance to West Island

+Fringe tree, *Chionanthus virginicus*, noted for its fragrant white blooms in spring, currently commands a second look for its drupes of olive-like blue black berries dangling in clusters from delicate stems. The berries provide food for birds and other wildlife; the dried roots and bark were used as an anti-inflammatory of Native Americans. These small trees mature at 12-20 feet and are ideal for a small garden or planted in groups along a woodland border.



The genus name comes from the Greek chion meaning "snow" and anthos meaning "flower"