

BRIGHT SPOTS

CURRENT GARDEN HIGHLIGHTS

August 26, 2024

+ Virginia Native Plant

Do you keep a garden journal? Even if you have just a few shrubs and perennials, having a record of bloom times and notes about plant health can provide information that over the years will help make you a more successful gardener. If you have kept bloom time records in the past few years, the warming trend in our USDA Zone 7B region will have been evident. The **Bright Spots** entry dates have certainly suggested a trend toward earlier flowering as the atmosphere, and thus the soil, warms. This warming trend can be worrisome, but it may allow you to experiment with plants that in previous years have not been reliably hardy in our region, allowing you to give your garden a tropical flair.



Plant in a container and its flower



Black cotton, *Gossypium herbaceum* 'Nigra' is an herbaceous plant in the Mallow family, native to sub-Saharan Africa and Arabia, with stunning deep purple to almost black foliage. Dark pink hibiscus-like flowers mature to purple, walnut sized seed pods (bolls) that pop open in late summer to reveal fluffy white cotton, with embedded seeds. A showstopper in the garden or a container, these plants are heavy feeders that want full sun, rich soil and regular watering. **Parking Lot B and in containers at the Garden Shop entrance.**



Seed pod forming the cotton



Caryopteris × *clandonensis* 'Dark Knight' enjoyed by a bee

Bluebeard, *Caryopteris* × *clandonensis*. This light airy shrub delights in late summer and early fall when there is little else blooming in the garden. Misty true blue flowers with "beards" of leaves at their base resemble clouds of smoke as they grow along the stems shrouding the fragrant silvery gray foliage. Covered with beneficial insects, it grows best in well-drained soil in full sun. The genus name comes from Greek *karyon* meaning "nut" and *pteron* meaning "wing" in reference to its winged fruits. **Parking Lot B, Fountain Garden, etc.**



'Dark Knight' in the Fountain Garden West



Multi-patterned leaves of *Neoregelia* on the Flourish Towers entering Four Seasons

Bromeliads. When choosing a bromeliad, focus on the strappy leaves, not the spectacular inflorescence, which will last only a few months. Although most bromeliads are epiphytes some grow in the soil. From the Flourish Towers to the Conservatory, you'll find multi-sized rosettes with varied color combinations, patterns and edgings. Bromeliads require bright diffused light; without it the vibrant colors will fade, or even turn green. New plants can be propagated from the rosette.



The brilliant red foliage of *Neoregelia* 'Fireball' also on the Flourish Tower entering Four Seasons



***Nymphaea*'s buoyant leaf stems that enable flotation in Sunken Garden Pool**

Water lilies, *Nymphaea*. Worldwide, water lilies are prized for their fragrant showy blooms in a rainbow of colors. Environmentally, water lilies help cool the water, absorb water-polluting nutrients and provide food and cover for wildlife. Too many lilies cause problems: reduced oxygen for aquatic life and choked waterways. In Virginia, hardy water lilies can survive year-round in deeper water (65°F); whereas tropical water lilies must be overwintered inside (75°F).



***Nymphaea* 'Turtle Island Tropic Star' in the Conservatory pool**



Flower

Stinking passionflower, *Passiflora foetida*, is a creeping/climbing vine with interesting flowers and edible fruit. Despite the name, it is only when leaves are crushed that they give off a bad odor. This vine is considered a protocarnivorous plant because it can trap or kill its prey in order to protect its flowers and fruit. The plant now displays flowers, 'hairy' bracts with developing fruits, and fruits with seeds inside - all at the same time! **Left side of the Conservatory entrance.**



Fruit with seeds inside hairy bracts



Closeup

Windflower, *Anemone hupehensis*, is a native of the Chinese province Hupeh. Victorian plant hunter Robert Fortune introduced it to Europe in 1844. This perennial is anchored by a basal rosette of dark-green leaves and has shallow saucer-like flowers in pink or white, single or double, which sway in the breeze at the end of long wiry stems. Plant in a protected location with soft shade and moist fertile soil. Vigorous growers, they spread! **Main Garden Walk & throughout.**



Along the Main Garden Walk



Look all around the Garden for these treasures

+ Beautyberry, *Callicarpa americana*. The gracefully arching branches of this native shrub produce their iridescent magenta berry-like fruits tucked close to the branch. They have larger fruit than the Asian species. The genus name means "beautiful fruit" – edible to native songbirds and mammals. The roots, leaves & branches were long used for medicinal & insecticidal purposes. Beautyberry can grow to 9' with favorable conditions (sun and moist, rich soil) but takes well to pruning as it blooms on new growth. **Throughout the Garden.**



The native species holds its berries close to the branches



Up close view of Evelyn

Rose, *Rosa* 'Aussaucer' Evelyn®, is an upright, medium size English shrub rose bred for its exceptional fragrance by David Austin in 1992. It has large, shallow saucer shaped blooms with intricately arranged petals intertwined in the center blending delicate pink with apricot undertones. Pause to enjoy the wonderful fragrance, reminiscent of an Old Rose but with a rich fruity essence of ripe peaches and apricots.



Louise Cochran Rose Garden, located in Bed RG10

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