

# BRIGHT SPOTS

## CURRENT GARDEN HIGHLIGHTS

October 28, 2024

### + Virginia Native Plant

Autumn has brought comfortable sunny days to the Richmond metro area, making gardening a delight, but it hasn't brought much rain. Usually, our region receives plenty of precipitation in the fall from the remnants of tropical storms. While no one misses drenching downpours, downed limbs, and power outages, the current weather pattern brings its own difficulties – from fire threats to drought. If you have crossed the James on the Boulevard Bridge, you will notice that the “Mighty James” is a small stream amongst a bed of rocks. This is the source of the Richmond metro’s water supply, so responsible use of water is imperative. Prioritize newly planted items but be a bit stingy with your lawn. LGBG irrigates primarily with our lake water. Homeowners with no room for a lake might wish to add a rain barrel!



***C. sasanqua* ‘Daydream’ on both sides of the Visitor Center North Terrace**

**Camellia, *Camellia sasanqua*.** Camellias have been cultivated for thousands of years in China and are a symbol of love and devotion. They often appear in Chinese art, literature, and poetry, to represent beauty, purity, and faithfulness. The fall-flowering *C. sasanqua* and its hybrids bloom for 4-6 weeks in sun/part shade and well-drained soil. The white to pink blossoms are formed in single or double rows of petals. The Garden now has species in bloom that weren't open a mere few weeks ago. **Throughout.**



***C. sasanqua* ‘Rainbow’ located behind the Flagler Pavilion**



**Feather Grass, *Nassella tenuissima*, located on the East Terrace above the fountain**

**Grasses.** We are greeted to the Garden with eulalia grass (*Miscanthus sinensis*), a tall stand of stems & leaves akin to a fountain of sparkling feathers. Throughout, you will find native and imported ornamental grasses swaying in the breeze. They provide almost year-round texture and interest if planted in the sun and moist, well-drained soil. Ornamental grasses can be invasive in Virginia; the Garden is evaluating these two varieties. Wait to cut back these grasses until spring so that you and the birds can enjoy their plumes all winter. **Throughout.**



**Eulalia grass, *Miscanthus sinensis*, in the Four Seasons Garden**



**Tartarian aster along the West Terrace above the fountain**

**Tartarian aster, *Aster tataricus*.** This native to Eastern Asia is a fast-growing, tall (a strong, stand-alone 3-6') perennial that blooms longer than any other garden aster. Its majestic stature, soft lavender color, and sweet nectar draw in migrating Monarch butterflies, bees, moths and other pollinators as a source of food. This aster has a history of treating respiratory as well as general bacterial infections.



**Tartarian aster aside the lawn in Flagler Garden**



***Dendranthemum* 'Celo's Pink'**  
along the East Terrace

**Cushion mum, hardy chrysanthemum, *Dendranthemum*.** Linnaeus named these sturdy perennials from the Greek words chrysos (gold) and anthemon (flower). Unlike potted garden mums, these perennial hardy mums provide pollinator loving beauty from October to frost every year. Cut the plant back by half in early summer and it will bloom on shorter stems that will not flop over. Then, root your cuttings in water or divide a piece to share with friends. It spreads with manners.



***D. x grandiflorum* 'Gethsemane Moonlight'** by the Flagler lawn.



Several trees reflected in the water along the edge of Lake Sydner

**+Swamp cypress, bald cypress, *Taxodium distichum*** is a deciduous, native conifer. Its soft, green, needle-like foliage is beginning to turn glorious bronze at this time of year before dropping to the ground ("bald"). Look for clusters of cones the color of oxidized copper. These large, rot-resistant trees develop hollow conical structures from the roots that may help to stabilize the tree in its damp environment. Native Americans repurposed the "knees" as beehives. Near water, throughout the Garden.



A closeup view of the foliage



Slender, upright male cones at the top and large female cones at the base of the tree.

**Atlas cedar, *Cedrus libani subsp. Atlantica* 'Glauca'** is native to the Atlas Mountains in North Africa. The short needles are arranged in small clusters maturing to blue-green. An ancient species, this is a true cedar that tolerates drought, heat and humidity while reaching 60' in height and living for 1,000 years. Wind pollinated, small finger-like male cones form at the top of the tree while large, barrel shaped female cones, at the base, receive the males' pollen grains as they float down. At the Lotus Bridge.



Closeup of the male cones



Glorious rhamnella in the Children's Garden as seen from the Cherry Tree Walk

**Rhamnella, *Rhamnella franguloides*,** a member of the Buckthorn family, is native to Asia. This small tree, with a spreading, loosely branched crown, has green, glossy textured leaves in summer that give way to a show-stopping display of clear gold/yellow leaves in fall. Inconspicuous spring flowers produce small dark fruit that feeds birds. Some members of this plant family are considered noxious weeds/invasive in some areas of the country. Children's Garden.



Closeup of the autumn leaves



Plants at a more advanced stage of fall coloration

**+Threadleaf bluestar, *Amsonia hubrichtii*,** may be a star in the spring garden with its pale-blue star flowers, but its second act in the fall is the real showstopper. Cooler temperatures trigger the feathery thread-like foliage to turn a brilliant gold. Comfortable in full sun to part shade and deer resistant, *Amsonia* is a welcome addition to a rain garden, a butterfly pollinator plot or a back border –perhaps as a highlight specimen in front of a scarlet maple tree. Throughout the Garden.



Group of plants beginning to change color – located in the Margaret Streb Conifer Garden