

Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden

By Beth Monroe and Jonah Holland—Richmond, Virginia

With more than 50 acres of year-round beauty, it's not surprising Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden is one of the most-visited attractions in the Richmond region. Our mission is education, and our passion is connecting people and plants to measurably improve our community. We have more than a dozen themed areas with seasonal displays and many paths to explore.

Let's start with our 63-foot-tall classical, domed Conservatory. It features unusual plants from around the world, including more than 200 orchids, seasonal displays, and our seasonal Butterflies LIVE! exhibit (April 15 to October 9, 2016) where you'll see hundreds of winged beauties. You'll have some wonderful photo opportunities as you watch them feed, flutter and take flight all around you.

We know you want to know more about other gardens! Here are some highlights, beginning with the Central Garden. As you leave the Georgian architecture of the Visitors Center, you will enter the Central Garden, which is a series of "garden rooms." Straight ahead you can see the glittering glass dome of the Conservatory, the jewel of the Garden.

The first "garden room" is the North Terrace, an elegant courtyard with a central fountain featuring glazed tiles representing magnolia leaves. Sounds of splashing water and pleasant fragrances begin the transition from the Visitors Center to the garden environment.

Next is the Four Seasons Garden. As the name implies, this intimate space provides year-round interest. Designed in classic Arts and Crafts style, the Four Seasons Garden also has a fountain, this one with whimsical frogs spouting water.

Proceed toward the Conservatory and the next space is the Healing Garden. This Garden reflects two of mankind's fundamental uses of plants – for medicine and healing. To the left you will find a small garden designed as a place for spiritual healing through contemplation, meditation, and reflection.



▲ Dodd and Dodd "Confederate Series" Hybrid *Rhododendron* x 'J. E. B. Stuart'

▼ *Rhododendron* 'Gable's Oink Conewago' in the Van Arnam *Rhododendron* Collection



To the right, an elliptical bed is accentuated with an oversized granite mortar and pestle. This space reflects the medicinal significance of plants and was inspired from the 1545 Renaissance Garden in Padua, Italy.

As you walk down the Main Garden Path, you'll see the Cochrane Rose Garden. Beauty, fragrance, and color abound with nearly 1,800 rose bushes featured in this 9,000 square-foot hillside garden. Arbors, stone arches, and pavilions are draped in more than 70 varieties of blooming roses originating from nurseries in



▲ Red-orange blooms of the *R. flammeum* Oconee Azalea with the "Lace House" in the background.

▼ *R. austrinum* "Florida Azalea"



France, Italy, Germany and England, with an emphasis on genetically superior hybrids bred for disease resistance, rebloom, and fragrance. You'll also find some azaleas here near the lake edge.

Pass through the wooden Moon Gate into the Asian Valley. Here you will see the spirit of Asian garden design with dramatic tree forms, cascading water, and the inclusion of boulders as a major design element. This garden celebrates the sacredness of nature and also provides a place for quiet contemplation. Asian Valley displays plants native to Asia that are adapted to growing conditions in the Mid-Atlantic and Southeastern United States. In addition to many conifers and broad

leafed evergreens, Asian Valley showcases an iris collection, many interesting Japanese maples, and of course many azaleas and rhododendrons!

You won't want to miss the Lotus Bridge, a gleaming silver ribbon crossing Lake Sydnor and connecting to the Flagler Garden. You'll find our largest collection of azaleas and rhododendrons here and along the surrounding woodland paths. The heart of this garden is an inviting green lawn, surrounded by collections of perennials, bulbs, woody plants, and blooming shrubs for an ever-changing palette of seasonal beauty. Hostas, crapemyrtles, and a plethora of ornamentals adorn the landscape. The Woodland Walk in Flagler and side footpaths provide ample opportunities to explore naturalistic areas featuring native plants. It's here that you will find the Joan Van Arnum Azalea Walk, created with an explosion of color in mind. Azaleas come in a wide range of colors, growth forms, and flower types. While walking through Azalea Walk, garden visitors will start at one end of the color spectrum of this genus and pass through many different shades and flower forms.

Nearby, you'll be able to explore the West Island Garden through a series of bridges and boardwalks. This wetland environment offers expansive views across the water and close-up experiences with plants and wildlife. Its focus is on native species; a highlight is the excellent collection of carnivorous pitcher plants.

Take time to examine the pitcher plants; they're beautiful and deadly... but to insects only! These plants live along the water's edge in nitrogen-poor soil and must capture insects in their pitchers, which are tube-like modified leaves, to get the nutrients they need. Notice the plants' bright colors and veining patterns; peer into their "pitchers" or long tubes and you may see lunch being digested!

Also adjacent to Flagler Garden is Grace Arents Garden and the historic home on the property, Bloemendaal House. Built in 1895 by Lewis Ginter, Bloemendaal House was originally a one-story bicycle club known as the Lakeside Wheel Club. The elegant, Victorian-style space around the house is the oldest garden on the property.

Lewis Ginter's niece, Grace Arents, first tended the garden here in the early 1900s. The Garden Club of Virginia restored the garden in 1990, based on its original early-1900s design. Grace Arents Garden features period-appropriate plants with an "old-fashioned" feel, a gazebo and two latticed arches covered with climbing roses, and a traditional boxwood border. An unusual combination of both annuals and perennials ensures something is always in bloom. Abundant peonies are stunning in the spring in combination with daffodils and tulips. Spectacular trees also populate this garden, the largest of which are a ginkgo, southern magnolia, and Darlington oak. The garden's centerpiece, a decorative sundial, is a 1914 original feature from Miss Grace's own garden. This beautiful area is a favorite place for weddings and special events.

The Cherry Tree Walk, circling Sydnor Lake is named for its spring-flowering cherries, but this path boasts other flowering trees and layered plantings to deliver year-round interest. The Cherry Tree Walk includes two floating docks, inviting visitors to discover aquatic life and new views of the garden. The Edible Display Garden, along the Cherry Tree Walk showcases plants and practices suitable for the home landscape. Also be sure to see the Lucy Payne Minor Garden, featuring daylilies, daffodils and flowering shrubs; the Margaret Streb Conifer Garden, with dwarf conifers and ornamental grasses; the Vienna Cobb Anderson Meadow, a hillside meadow attractive to birds and pollinators; and a constructed wetland nearby.

We can't wait for you to visit our Garden! Our friendly staff, great gar-



Photo Don Williamson

▲ Pink Satsuki Azalea R. 'Kaempo' in Asian Valley

dens and events, and outstanding dining and shopping have resulted in the following awards: USA Today's "10 Best Public Gardens" voted number two by readers in 2014; Travel Channel's "Best Botanical Gardens in the U.S." in 2013; and International Garden Tourism Award's "Top 10 North American Gardens Worth Travelling For" in 2013.

We'd love you to follow us on social media, and to get a better feel for our garden and what's blooming when you visit. (Please note you do not have to have an account to view our photos and content.)

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/LewisGinter>

Instagram: <https://instagram.com/lewisginter/>

Blog (you can subscribe via email for updates too): <http://www.lewisginter.org/blog/>

Web site: <http://www.lewisginter.org/>

Beth Monroe is Public Relations and Marketing Director at Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden. She feels honored to be part of a team connecting people and plants to improve our community. **Jonah Holland** is the Public Relations and Marketing Coordinator at the garden, specializing in social media. She's been known to go for a walk, and come back completely inspired to write a blog post on her newest found adventure.



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