

The Southern Agenda

GOINGS-ON IN THE SOUTH & BEYOND



★
Editors' Choice

GARDENS

The Flower Power of Historic Gardens

STATEWIDE VIRGINIA

"This small garden is half my world," wrote Anne Spencer, the late Harlem Renaissance poet, civil rights leader, and member of the Negro Garden Club of Virginia, which was founded ninety years ago. Spencer's wisteria-draped and rose-lined yard in Lynchburg wasn't just a place to exercise her green thumb. "It was a retreat where she could go into her own world away from the things she was facing as a Black woman," says her granddaughter Shaun Spencer-Hester, the executive director of the Anne Spencer House

WLEYS ISLAND | MURRELLS INLET | LITCHFIELD BEACH
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LITTLE THINGS, BIG MOMENTS

SOUTH CAROLINA'S
HAMMOCK COAST

DISCOVER
South Carolina

SOUTHERN AGENDA

and Garden Museum. Spencer's is one of 128 properties visitors can wander at the eighty-ninth annual **Historic Garden Week** in Virginia—the only statewide event of its kind. After canceling in 2020 due to COVID, and adjusting to health protocols in 2021, this year it returns in full bloom and presents nearly thirty tour routes (April 23–30) that make stops at both pocket gardens and historic estates. “Eyre Hall is on the Eastern Shore, and the owners plant a crazy amount of tulips every year that are all timed to peak during garden week,” says director Karen Ellsworth. “People go wild. I have heard of folks putting ice cubes around their tulips because they were blooming too fast.” That’s the level of dedication homeowners and the event’s 3,400 volunteers maintain to share their passion for plants. They likely feel similarly to Spencer, who wrote, “Earth, I thank you for the pleasure of your language.”

■ vagardenweek.org

MUSIC

Alabama

OPENING ACTS

From Hank Williams, Percy Sledge, and Martha Reeves to Lionel Richie and Alabama Shakes, the Yellowhammer State has turned out some of America’s most influential musicians. And come May, the North Alabama city that helped put a man on the moon will add “major entertainment destination” to its list of titles with the opening of the eight-thousand-seat **Orion Amphitheater** in Huntsville. Mayor Tommy Battle calls it “an impressive quality-of-life addition to complement our thriving arts and entertainment community.” It’s no surprise the mayor is beaming, but leave it to a lineup of all-star musicians to fittingly christen Huntsville’s newest digs—Brittany Howard, Emmylou Harris, Mavis Staples, Jason Isbell and the 400 Unit, and the rising Alabama star Waxahatchee will headline the venue during the **First Waltz**, a three-day musical bonanza (May 13–15). “It’s a dream come true to get to take part in the opening of a venue that’s destined to become an icon in Alabama music history,” says Katie Crutchfield, a.k.a. Waxahatchee. “I can’t wait.”

■ theorionhuntsville.com

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