



Introduction

Welcome to the Smithsonian Garden's *History in Full Bloom* backpack program for the Haupt Garden! The Haupt Garden is located between the Smithsonian Castle and Independence Avenue in Washington, D.C.

History in Full Bloom is an interpretive backpack program that allows children in kindergarten through fourth grade to engage in several multi-sensory activities throughout the Haupt Garden that will enhance their understanding of the history of the Smithsonian. By actively using the space and resources of the gardens, children will gain a wider appreciation of how gardens preserve the culture of Victorian America, as well as the Smithsonian's long history of collecting plants and educating visitors about natural history. This program will show children that studying history is an exhilarating adventure to be experienced in full bloom. Embark on your own journey through history by exploring the activities throughout the Haupt Garden.

Our story begins with James Smithson, a wealthy mineralogist and chemist, who left his fortune and collection of scientific objects from around the world to the United States of America in 1836. His wish to create "an establishment for the increase and diffusion of knowledge among men" was carried out by Congress in founding the Smithsonian Institution a decade later in 1846. Curators of the Smithsonian embarked on expeditions to collect plants from around the world and display them among Smithson's collections. The Smithsonian led Victorian America in the effort to document, display and diffuse knowledge of its collections, seeking to express its confidence in America's cultural and intellectual superiority. Today it remains America's greatest cultural institution, caring for vast collections and providing educational resources for the benefit of the public.

One such collection is preserved in the Haupt Garden, a representation of American Victorian gardens during the mid to late nineteenth century (1850-1900). Located behind the Smithsonian Castle, the Haupt Garden's central component is a symmetrically patterned parterre (French for "on the ground"), surrounded by the Moongate Garden and the Fountain Garden. Due to the Smithsonian's perpetual interest in exploration, the Haupt Garden maintains a diverse collection of exotic plant species from around the world. The Haupt Garden continues to cultivate a collection of living artifacts that convey the history of the Smithsonian and its deep-seated roots in Victorian America.



Purpose

- Teach children about Parterres, low lying garden centerpieces that exhibit both geometric and symmetrical designs.
- Expose children to other period parterres.
- Encourage comparative thinking a problem solving by matching parterres.
- Encourage creative thinking by designing a parterre.
- Reinforce spatial awareness by creating symmetrical designs.

Length of activity: 10 minutes

Age/Grade level: Grades Kindergarten-4, 5-9 years of age

Location: Renwick Gates

Learning Goals:

- Students will learn about Victorian culture through several activities, exploring the past through multiple subjects such as history, math, science, and English.
- Students will use the resources of the Haupt Garden to build an awareness of their physical surroundings and relate to a sense of place that they can recognize outside of the Smithsonian. This will involve making the children actors in the historical narrative of the program and allow them to create their own experiences in the garden.
- Students will understand the importance of cultural landscapes by making connections between the past and present shape of the garden, using primary sources such as photographs, poetry and sketches.
- Students will gain a better understanding of the Smithsonian's collecting expeditions during the Victorian era by interacting with various objects and living artifacts from around the world. They will understand the importance of why the Smithsonian collected from certain places and how these collections represented wealth and the mission to increase and diffuse knowledge.
- Overall, students will develop skills to think historically about plants, gardens and landscapes that they can apply in their own backyard.

What you'll need:

- 3 photographs of parterres cut into puzzle pieces- need to be cut out beforehand
- Geometric shapes-need to be cut out beforehand
- Handheld mirror- not included



Activity:

Parterres are low-lying gardens that contain symmetrical shapes and designs. What makes a parterre unique is how it is symmetrically designed, meaning that if you draw a line down the middle each side will look like a mirror-image of the other. The Smithsonian chose to preserve a parterre in this space because it represents the common type of garden designed when the Smithsonian first opened in the 1800s, also known as the Victorian era. Victorians enjoyed collecting things, especially plants. They arranged their plants in this way to express their love of beauty and order.

BEGIN:

1. Take the puzzle pieces out. Each piece has a picture of part of a parterre. Put the three puzzles together. Does each half look exactly like the other? Are these gardens symmetrical?
2. Now it is time to make your own parterre. Take out the geometric shapes. Combine them any way you like. The more shapes you use the more complex you can make your design, but remember that it needs to be symmetrical. Use the mirror to check your design. Stand the mirror up in the middle of your design. If the mirror looks like the side you are covering up, you are on the right track. Now that you have created your very own parterre, look at the shapes. What shapes did you start with? Did you make any new shapes when you created your parterre?

****Optional challenge for older students****

Split into teams.

Teacher or chaperone: design a parterre with emphasis on complexity and symmetry.

Give each team the same pieces used in the teacher parterre plus a few extras.

Show the teams the teacher parterre and let them race to copy it.



Parterre #1
Dunrobin Castle, Scotland.
Minnesota State University



Parterre #2
Bishop's Palace, Castres, France.
Boxtrees Nursery



Parterre #3
Phillip Watson Private Garden.
Roger Foley

Geometric Shapes to be used for Creating "Your Own Parterre"

