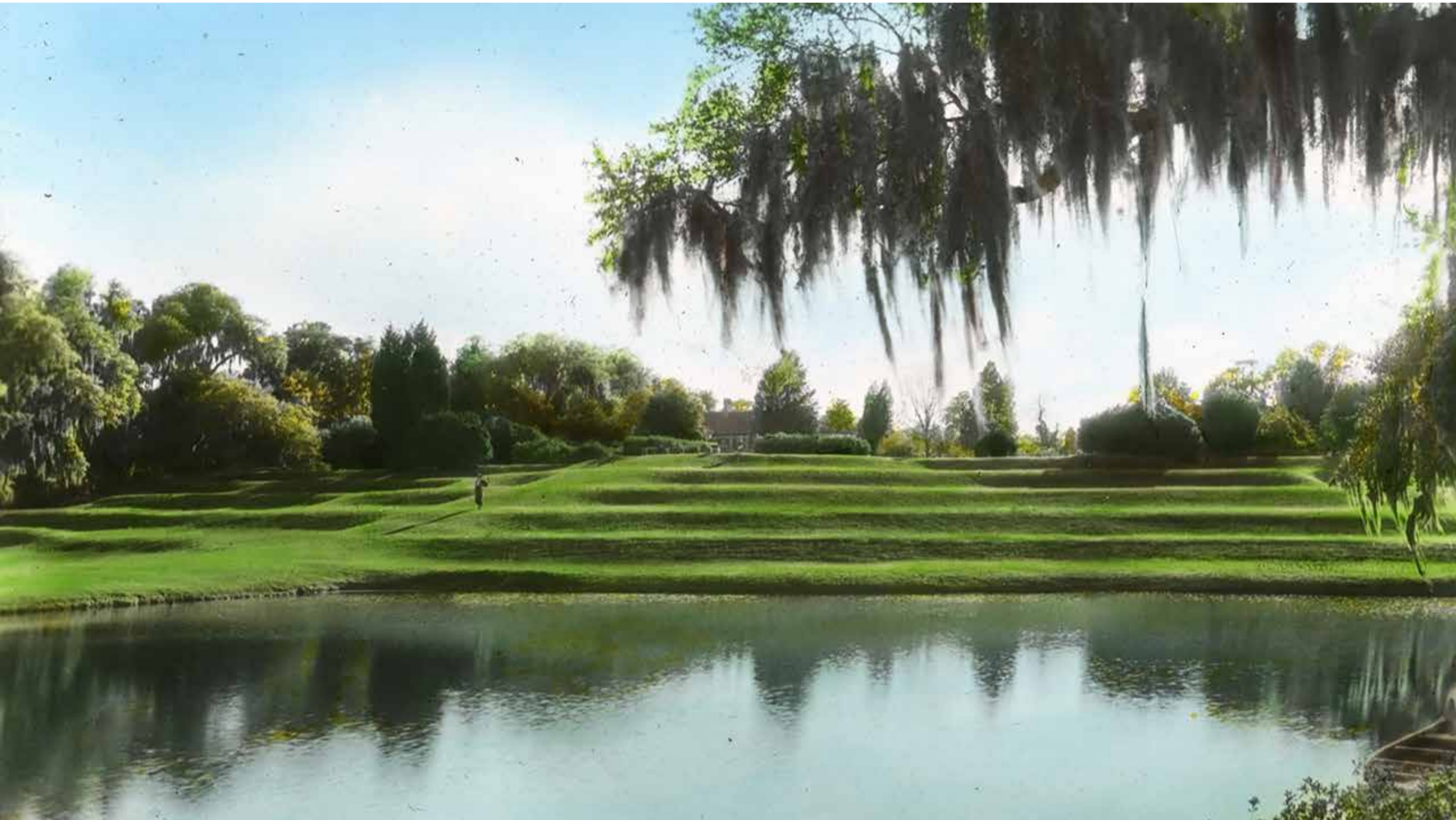




Smithsonian Gardens



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Timeline of American Garden History

Investigate the history of the American garden and its transformation from the mid-1600s to the present. This timeline encompasses the development of public gardens, private estates, national preserves, botanical gardens, and the American wilderness.

1565 Spaniards Settle St. Augustine

Spaniards settle St. Augustine, Florida, bringing plants from Spain and novelties from the West

Indies.

[References](#)



1607 Jamestown



English colonists settle in Virginia, naming their colony Jamestown. They bring seeds from England, but also cultivate crops grown by Native Americans, such as tobacco, corn, beans, and squash.

[References](#)

1619-1865 Gardens of Slavery

Hidden from view at the “back of the big house” on plantations, the gardens created by African American slaves in the U.S. are an important part of garden history. In addition to tending the crops of slave owners, many African Americans found time to cultivate their own garden plots. These gardens provided additional food to the enslaved community and sometimes yielded enough produce to sell for profit.

[References](#)



1620 Pilgrims Arrive in New England

Pilgrims arrive in the New World seeking religious freedom. Unfamiliar with the land, they follow the practices of the local Wampanoag tribe to prepare enough crops for sustenance.

The colonists grow corn, beans, pumpkins, wheat, barley, oats, peas, and a variety of herbs in fields and gardens near their homes.

[References](#)

1629 Dutch Settle on Manhattan

The Dutch settle in what is now New York, creating settlements in Manhattan, Long Island, and along the Hudson Valley. They cultivate orchards and farms and introduce many European flowers to the area. Dutch settler Adrian van der Donck wrote that the colonists grew a variety of roses, gilliflowers, tulips, crown imperials, white lilies, anemones, violets, and marigolds.

[References](#)

1630s Expansion of New England Gardens

The English grew apples, pears, plums, lilacs, boxwoods, European snowballs, and English yew in their New England gardens.

[References](#)

1639 Jamestown Settlement Requirements

In the Jamestown colony, officials pass a law requiring all settlers with over one hundred acres of land to plant orchards and gardens, and fence them in.

[References](#)

1640 Establishment of a Public Park in the New World



In Boston, the Puritans purchas 44 acres of property to designate as a public green space, known as the Boston Common.

[References](#)

1713 Governor's Palace Gardens

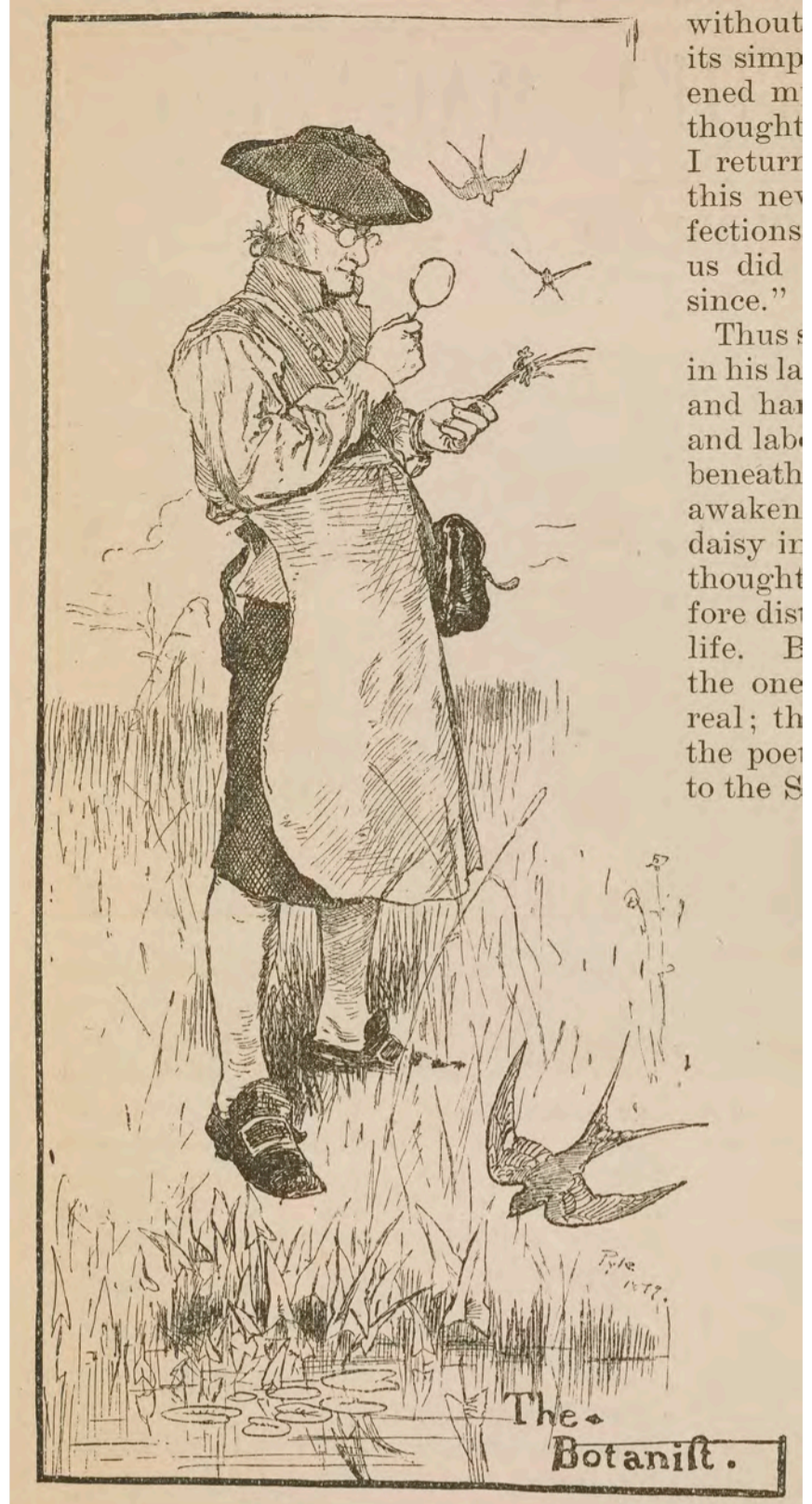


The gardens surrounding the Governor's Palace in Williamsburg, Virginia begin under the direction of Governor Alexander Spotswood.

[References](#)



1728 Botanical Garden in Philadelphia founded



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John Bartram of Philadelphia establishes his botanic garden, known to be the oldest surviving of its kind in North America. In 1732, Bartram began trading seeds and plants with Peter Collinson, a London merchant and botanist. His reputation in international trade and botany earned him the title of “Royal Botanist” to King George III. Bartram was considered the greatest naturalist in the world, and was believed to have introduced 150 North American plant species to Europe.

[References](#)

1737 First Commercial Nursery opens in New York

Robert Prince opens the first modern commercial nursery in Flushing, New York with his son William. Known as the Linnaean Nursery, it was famous for trading plants between Europe and North America. The family business operated for almost 130 years.

[References](#)



1741 America's Early Landscaped Gardens



Henry Middleton begins work on his vision for the plantation's gardens, now considered to be the oldest landscaped gardens in the United States. The labor of enslaved people enabled plantations like Middleton Place to expand and create ornamental gardens. Middleton hired an English gardener design six terraces and a pair of "butterfly lakes," to be excavated by enslaved laborers.

[References](#)



1754 George Washington Inherits Mount Vernon





George Washington inherits Mount Vernon and begins developing its gardens. He wrote, "... to be a cultivator of land has been my favorite amusement."

[References](#)



1766 Gardens at Monticello



Future President Thomas Jefferson cultivates hundreds of varieties of vegetables, fruits, and flowers at his Virginia estate Monticello. Jefferson writes to artist Charles Wilson Peale, "No occupation is so delightful to me as the culture of the earth, and no culture comparable to that of the garden. I am still devoted to the garden. But though an old man, I am but a young gardener."

[References](#)

1796 Bernard McMahon Opens a Seed Store In Philadelphia

McMahon (also written as M'Mahon) was an international seed trader famous for preserving seeds brought back from the Lewis and Clark expedition and supplying buyers such as Thomas Jefferson.





1802 G. Thorburn & Son's Seed and Florist Shop

Grant Thorburn begins selling seeds in his hardware store in New York City. The store's catalog was the first to be issued in pamphlet form and feature illustrations.

[References](#)

1803 The Louisiana Purchase



The Louisiana Purchase of 1803 doubles the land area of the United States and officially opens "the West" for settlement. As settlers from Europe pour into the United States, so too did their seeds, plants, and gardening styles.

[References](#)

1820 U.S. Botanic Garden



An act of Congress establishes the United States Botanic Garden in Washington, D.C.

ca. 1829 Formerly enslaved, James F. Brown becomes Master Gardener at Mount Gulian in Fishkill, New York



By 1829, James F. Brown, a manumitted enslaved person from Maryland, finds work as a Master Gardener at Mount Gulian, the Verplanck's estate in Fishkill Landing, New York. Brown kept diaries of his daily life and was very active in the 19th century horticulture movement. He attended meetings and corresponded with important horticulturists of the day such as Andrew Jackson Downing and Henry Winthrop Sargent.

[References](#)

1830 Mount Auburn Cemetery

1830s Urban Growth Produces Country Homes

As developments in streetcar transportation make it more convenient to commute from crowded and unsanitary urban centers, middle-class families relocate to the outskirts of cities. Many wealthy urban dwellers also purchase country estates and revive an interest in the cultivation of gardens and preserving the natural landscape.

[References](#)

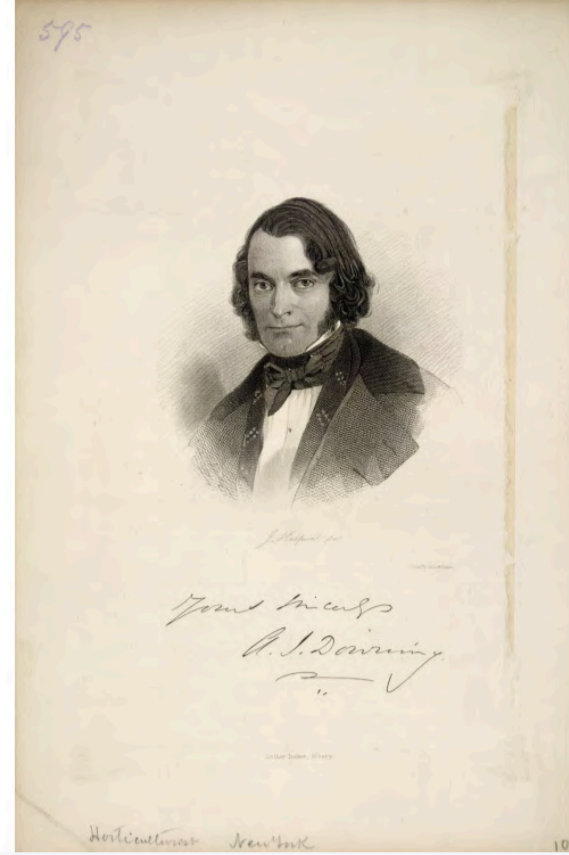


Organized by the Massachusetts Horticultural Society, Mount Auburn Cemetery is the first of many rural cemeteries that played an integral role in 19th century life. Covering 175 acres, the cemetery is landscaped with ornamental plantings, ponds, monuments, fences, fountains, and chapels that provide a setting to commemorate the dead as well as inspire a tranquil environment.

[References](#)



1841 Downing's "A Treatise on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening" Published



Horticulturalist and writer Andrew Jackson Downing publishes the first edition of "A Treatise on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening Adapted to North America." In the book he introduces what is later considered the "American Dream": "... an attachment to a certain spot, and a desire to render that place attractive—a feeling which seems more or less strongly fixed in the minds of all men."

[References](#)

1858 Central Park Commission

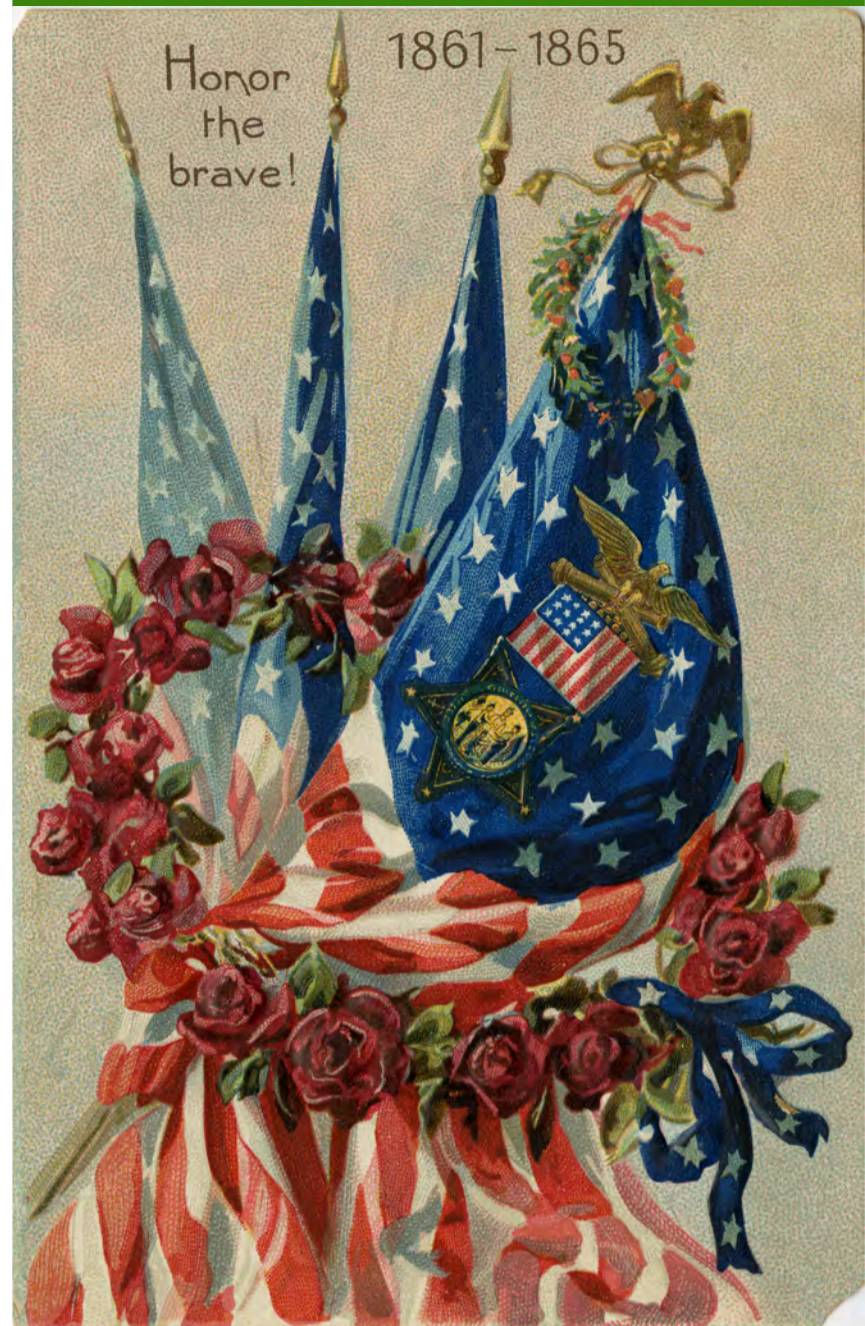


Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux win the commission for New York's Central Park which spurred the creation of parks across the United States. Olmsted was firmly established as the foremost landscape architect of the time, designing public commissions and private estates alike.

[References](#)



1861-1865 The Civil War



From 1861-1865 the Civil War interrupts the rise of horticultural activity by curtailing the "embellishment of gardens and decoration of grounds."

[References](#)

1860s-1890s Victorian Gardens in the U.S.



Both architecture and landscape design in America were culturally influenced by European Victorianism. American families with "old money" designed summerhouses, decorated with ornate accessories, and cultivated lawns for leisurely outdoor activities.

[References](#)



1872 First National Park



Congress establishes Yellowstone as the first National Park, though few guidelines or funds are assigned to preserve it.

[References](#)

1872 Arnold Arboretum



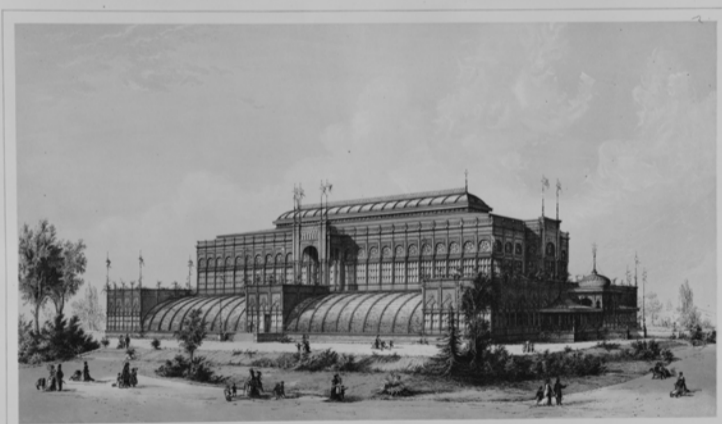
Arnold Arboretum is founded by Harvard University, making it the oldest public arboretum in North America.

[References](#)



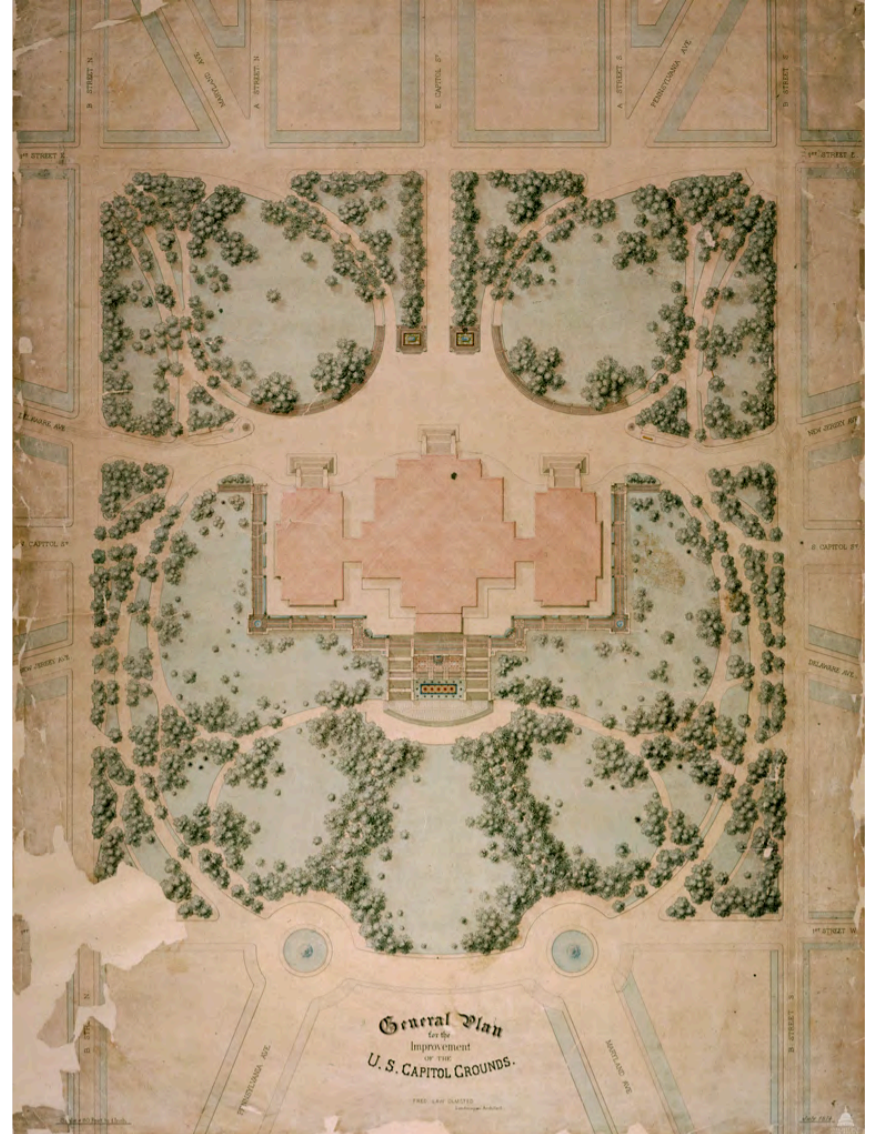
1874 Olmsted's Plan for the U.S. Capitol Grounds

1876 Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia



HORTICULTURAL HALL
INTERNATIONAL EXHIBITION, PHILADELPHIA
1876.

The Centennial Exposition's Horticultural Hall in Philadelphia showcases exotic specimens and garden displays to millions of visitors.



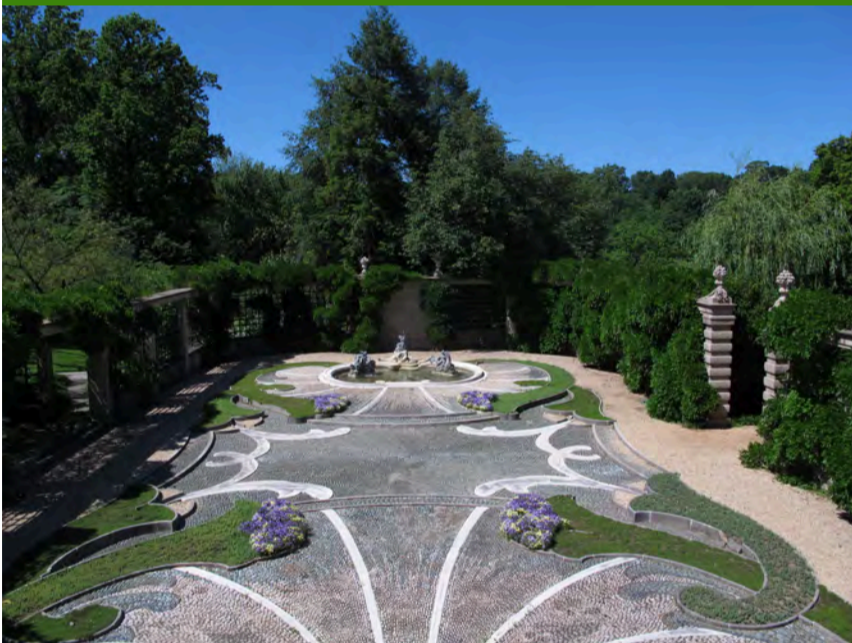
Frederick Law Olmsted creates a plan for the design of the U.S. Capitol grounds in Washington, D.C., with drives, paths, trees, fountains, and terraces.

[References](#)



1878 Burpee Seed Company

1880s-1890s The Arts and Crafts and Aesthetic Movements



The emergence of the Arts and Crafts movement shaped architectural and artistic trends of the period. The movement developed in England in response to industrial consumerism and its ideals—simple traditional craftsmanship—flourished in North America. Early stages of the movement are often associated with Aestheticism which advocated “art for art’s sake.”

[References](#)



The W. Atlee Burpee & Co. of Philadelphia is founded and later becomes the largest mail-order seed company in the world.

[References](#)

1883 The American Seed Trade Association is Founded

The American Seed Trade Association is founded by a group of seedsmen to address their concerns with seed tariffs, postage on mail order seeds, and protection against unjust claims for damages. ASTA is considered to be one of the oldest trade organizations in the United States.

[References](#)

1886 Beauty from Nature



English art critic John Ruskin “formulate[s] a theory by which architecture could be judged by its dependence on natural form, and ornament was only acceptable when it was clearly derived from natural sources.” The contrived, exotic gardens of the Victorian era quickly became commonplace, unnatural, and out of fashion.

[References](#)

1891 Ladies Garden Club of Athens



A group of women from Georgia organize the Ladies Garden Club of Athens, recognized as the first women's gardening society of its kind.

[References](#)

1892 "Mother of Balboa Park"



Horticulturist Kate Sessions arranges to lease 30 acres of land in San Diego, California for Balboa Park (originally called City Park), in exchange for planting 100 trees a year in the park and 300 trees a year in the rest of the city. The park has a collection of cypress, pine, oak, pepper tree, and eucalyptus grown from Sessions' seeds imported from around the world.

[References](#)



1893 World's Columbian Exposition



Frederick Law Olmsted was a member of the design team lead by architect Daniel Burnham who brought classical architecture on a grand scale to Chicago's World Columbian Exposition. Urban planning and the height of Neo-Classicism inspired the "white city" created for the Exposition.

[References](#)

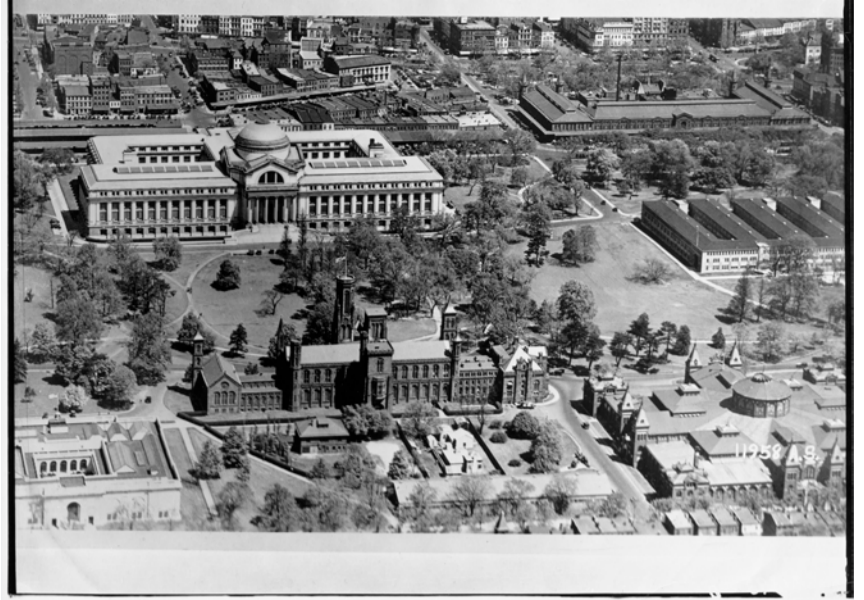
1900 First Landscape Architecture Program



Harvard University establishes the world's first academic program in landscape architecture in 1900. Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr. is hired as an instructor.



1901 McMillan Plan for Washington, D.C.



On the 100th year anniversary of Washington, D.C.'s establishment as a capital city, President William McKinley appointed a commission to improve the design of Washington, keeping in mind the original plan that military engineer Pierre L'Enfant had in mind when he first laid out the nation's "Federal City" in 1791.

[References](#)

1902 School Gardens



Fannie Griscom Parsons (1850-1923), a pioneer of school gardens in the United States, spearheads the idea of creating school gardens. Parsons used a portion of DeWitt Clinton Park on the west side of Manhattan to create 360 miniature garden plots. The gardens served as a place for children (many of them the children of European immigrants to the U.S.) to become "proper" American citizens through the process of gardening, environmental beautification, and contact with the natural world.

[References](#)



1903 City Beautiful Movement

The City Beautiful Movement grows from increased interest in urban planning and its effect on a city's inhabitants. The movement advocates that beauty would foster moral and civic virtue among urban populations. Charles Mulford Robinson was the first to write on the subject of urban planning in his 1903 book "Modern Civic Art; or, The City Made Beautiful." His work was theoretical, investigating how people interacted and benefited from urban planning and the positive effects of gardens on city design.

[References](#)

1910s-1930s Gardens of the Great Migration



As they moved to urban cities in the North during the early 20th century, working class African Americans created distinctive neighborhoods with yards that contained vegetable gardens. "By growing familiar foods, they not only supplemented their incomes and diet, but, through exchanges or gifts of fresh produce, reinforced community bonds and preserved tangible links to their heritage as African American southerners."

[References](#)

1912 Plant Quarantine Act

The Plant Quarantine Act goes into effect, restricting the importation of nursery stock, plants, and seeds from foreign countries to prevent the possible transmission of plant diseases and pests.

[References](#)

1913 The Garden Club of America Founded



The Garden Club of America grew out of a letter-writing campaign to several garden clubs by Mrs. J. Willis Martin and Mrs. Bayard Henry. At their first national meeting members adopt the policy that, "The objects of this association shall be: to stimulate the knowledge and love of gardening among amateurs; to share the advantages of association through conference and correspondence, in this country and abroad; to aid in the protection of native plants and birds; and to encourage civic planting."

[References](#)

1915 Rise of the Lawn

The United States Department of Agriculture, working with the U.S. Golf Association, conducts research to find grasses suited for particular climates and uses.

1917-1918 U.S. War Gardens During World War I

The Fruits of Victory



Write for Free Book to
National War Garden Commission
Washington, D. C.
Charles Lathrop Pack, President P.S. Ridsdale, Secretary

“Probably no other appeal to the patriotism of the American people ever met with more widespread and generous response than ‘war gardening.’...[S]purred on by the knowledge that ‘food will win the war’ men, women, and children all over the United States took up war gardening...Both as individuals and as members of various organizations they have gone about this as true soldiers of the soil, in the same spirit with which their husbands, fathers, brothers, and friends went into the army and the navy.”

[References](#)



1917-1918 School Gardens
Transformed



During World War I, many school lots transform into vegetable gardens to supplement the war effort.

1922 American Horticultural Society

Several horticultural groups in the Washington, D.C. area merge to create the American Horticultural Society. AHS is considered one of the oldest gardening organizations in the United States.

1927 National Arboretum



An Act of Congress establishes the United States National Arboretum in Washington, D.C.

1937 League of Southern California Japanese Gardeners Formed

First generation Japanese immigrant (Nisei) Shoji Nagumo organizes Japanese gardeners to challenge discriminatory practices. Regional gardening associations become the League of Southern California Japanese Gardeners.

[References](#)



1937 Construction of Greenbelt, Maryland



GREENBELT, MARYLAND
RESETTLEMENT ADMINISTRATION
DIVISION OF SUBURBAN RESETTLEMENT

Modeled after Ebenezer Howard's garden city ideal developed in England, Greenbelt, Maryland is a planned community built by the Federal Government during the Great Depression.

[References](#)



1942-1945 Victory Gardens





Millions of tons of fruits and vegetables are grown by citizens who planted victory gardens to aid in the war effort. A victory garden is even planted on the White House grounds.

[References](#)



1942-1945 Victory Gardens in Internment Camps



“The irony of victory gardens for an interned population was dramatic.” Many American citizens of Japanese ancestry plant victory gardens while being unjustly held in internment camps during World War II.

1950s-1960s Rise of the Suburbs



After World War II, more people than ever before moved from cities to newly built suburbs. In these middle-class developments, gardens often turned inward to the backyard, where patios were used for private relaxation and entertainment.

[References](#)

1962 Publication of Silent Spring



Biologist and conservationist Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* draws attention to the effect of pesticides and pollution on the environment.

1970 Earth Day

The U.S. celebrated its first Earth Day on April 22, 1970.



1970s-2000s Gardens of Urban Revitalization

Urban gardens counter the previous decades' private gardens by turning cultivation outward again. Residents in urban areas plagued by abandoned buildings and vacant lots revitalized the places they called home. Many urban agriculture initiatives respond to concerns about food security, health, and the environment of communities.



1973 Endangered Species Act

The Endangered Species Act, designed to protect threatened and endangered plants and plant habitats in the United States, goes into effect.

[References](#)



1974 Pennsylvania Horticultural Society's Philadelphia Green Program Established



Residents of West Philadelphia decided to transform the vacant lots where row houses once stood. Collaborating with the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society, gardens were created on this site.

[References](#)

1975 Premier of The Victory Garden on PBS



Originally called "Crockett's Victory Garden" after the first host James Underwood Crockett, the PBS show revolutionized garden television. Crockett (and his successor, Bob Thomson) demonstrated how to care for vegetable gardens with episodes about planting, pruning, potting, and pest control.

1990 Revitalization of Meridian Hill Park



Environmentalist Josephine Butler, along with Rev. Morris Samuel and Howard Coleman, forms the Friends of Meridian Hill Park to clean up the

space and redeem it from a reputation as the “most murderous” section of Washington, D.C.

[References](#)

2000s Resurgence of Community Gardens



Americans continued to form community gardens into the new millennium. Organized programs centered around children, the elderly, and immigrant populations and intended to educate as well as provide neighborhood sustenance.



2009 Gardens Return to the White House



First Lady Michelle Obama plants the first garden at the White House since World War II on the South Lawn. Called the White House Kitchen Garden, it encourages national conversations around health and well-being in the United States.

[References](#)



“What can you say about a country whose two most important contributions to the history of landscape consist of the front lawn and the wilderness park? One safe conclusion would be that this is a culture whose thinking on the subject of nature is somewhat schizophrenic—that it is unsure whether it wants to dominate nature in the name of civilization or to worship it, untouched, as a means of escape from civilization.”

[References](#)