Hi, I’m Michael Marcotrigano, the Director of the Botanic Garden here at Smith College. The college founders were aware of the impact that an aesthetic campus has on the well being of students and faculty. In that spirit, they commissioned the landscape architectural firm of Frederick Law Olmsted, the designer of Central Park, to design the college grounds, which were completed in late 1892.

The original design included greenhouses situated in the lower part of the campus, herbaceous gardens adjacent to the greenhouses, and an arboretum of trees and shrubs encompassing the entire remainder of campus. (In 1895, Edward H.R. Lyman gave a generous donation to build additional greenhouses, as well as the building you are standing in today. In return, the greenhouse at Smith was called “The Lyman Plant House.” Despite subsequent renovations and expansions, the integrity of the original design has not been compromised and the Victorian charm remains.

The botanical value of our plant collection lies in its’ ability to provide a resource for teaching and research, and is intended to be broadly representative of the plant kingdom. Today the Conservatory functions as:

- A living laboratory for students interested in plant biology
- A seed bank for trading valuable plants with botanic gardens worldwide
- A source for plants and DNA for researchers around the world
- An inspiration for visiting art students and artists
- A place for seasonal flower shows
- And a place of beauty and inspiration to those who choose to live their lives surrounded by plants.

As Director, I wish to thank all supporters of our facility. We are able to offer you such an exquisite experience because of the generosity of Smith College, endowed funds, visitor donations, and membership fees of The Friends of the Botanic Garden.

I know you’ll enjoy your visit and want to return often. If you’d like to learn more about our plants, programs and facilities after taking this audio tour, our staff will be pleased to answer your questions.