

Capen Garden



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Capen Garden, named for Bessie Capen, is located off Prospect Street in the northeast corner of the Smith College campus. This secret treasure is one of several outdoor gardens on the 125-acre campus. Its dual functions of education and display serve the Botanic Garden's mission well. The garden is used by horticulture students as a living laboratory, and at the same time it is enjoyed by the visiting public. Displays of tulips, mountain laurel, lilacs, roses, annuals, and perennials in addition to a variety of trees and shrubs make the garden a delight in any season.

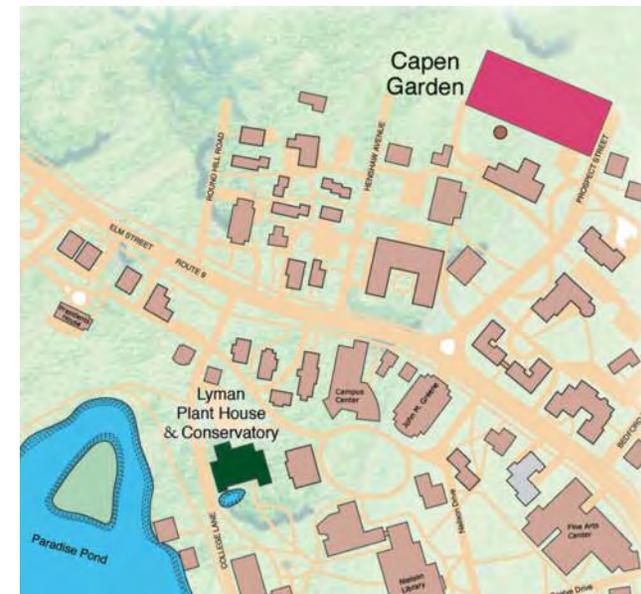


The Garden's namesake, Bessie Capen,

had a lifelong commitment to education. One of the first women admitted to the

Massachusetts Institute of Technology, she later headed the chemistry department at Wellesley College. In 1876 Smith College's President Seelye invited Capen to chair the newly organized department of chemistry. She was also instrumental in the creation of the Classical School for Girls in Northampton, a college-preparatory school opened in 1877 by Miss Mary Burnham at President Seelye's request. The school's goals were to foster "intellectual development, to teach right habit of living, and to strengthen character." Capen resigned from her position at Smith to devote her efforts to the preparatory school. She became principal following Burnham's death in 1885, renaming the school the Mary A. Burnham School. She later split from the Burnham School and created the Capen School, which she ran until her death in 1920 at the age of 81. The buildings and grounds were sold to Smith in 1921.

Capen Garden has a history of continuous academic use by students since Smith College acquired the property in 1921. It encompasses just under an acre next to the 1825 Greek Revival style Capen House, currently a student residence. Smith botany students tended individual garden plots in the 1920s through the 1940s, gaining hands-on experience in the design, planting, and care of plants. The garden, which features a series of outdoor garden rooms, has undergone several redesigns over the years. The most recent redesign and renovation completed in 2005 resulted in greater accessibility and visibility of the garden, as well as greater functionality for the Botanic Garden staff.



The Smith College campus was designed over 100 years ago to serve as a botanic garden and as a landscape for learning. The spirit of this concept has persisted since that time and remains basic to our purpose. Today, the Botanic Garden serves as a living museum of New England flora and of plants native to ecosystems around the globe. Our plant collections, showcased in the Lyman Conservatory, Campus Arboretum, and specialty gardens, are designed to be aesthetically pleasing as well as of scientific value. Our goals are display, education, research, and conservation.

The Botanic Garden of Smith College



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1. Annual Vine Display

2. Capen Greenhouse

The greenhouse and nursery areas provide work space for plant propagation and production, but they are not open to the general public. Lyman Conservatory, on the other side of campus, provides public greenhouse displays.

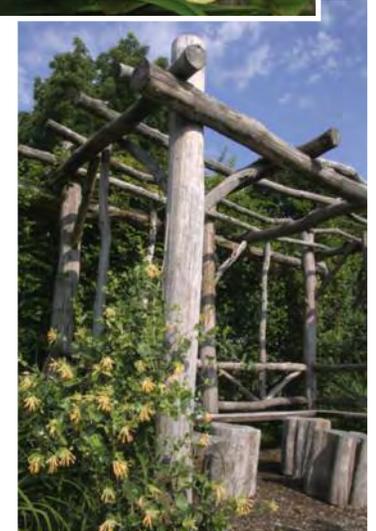


3. Perimeter Stroll Lilacs and perennials line a pathway along the northeast side of the garden, connecting the Changing Color Displays to the Meditation Circle.



4. Daylily Display

Stout Silver Medal award-winning daylily cultivars are displayed chronologically. They are at their peak in late June and early July.



5. Rustic Pergola

1. Annual Vine Display
2. Capen Greenhouse (not open to the public)
3. Perimeter Stroll
4. Daylily Display
5. Rustic Pergola
6. Rose Arbor
7. Changing Color Displays
8. Cultivar Display
9. Knot Garden
10. Friends Fountain
11. Outdoor Classroom
12. Gathering Lawn
13. A to Z Garden
14. Gazebo Garden
15. Meditation Garden
16. Paperbark Maple Grove
17. Shade Garden



6. Rose Arbor The 65-foot arbor crafted from locally harvested black locust, a strong and long-lasting hardwood, is ablaze with rose blossoms in mid June to early July. The arbor leads to a vine-covered rustic pergola and seating area at the western end. Perennials line the path with seasonal blooms.



7. Changing Color Displays

8. Cultivar Display Devoted to displaying cultivars that show the wealth of horticultural diversity resulting from long-term breeding efforts, this area allows for the examination and comparison of startling differences within groups of similar plants.



9. Knot Garden This garden honors Carol Brown, Smith class of 1911. It was dedicated in 1989 to commemorate her 100th birthday and was planned as a knot garden in the English Elizabethan tradition. Boxwood and barberry form the structural elements of the knot, with a variety of annuals planted inside each year.



14. Gazebo Garden Installed in 1985, the gazebo honors Jill Ker Conway, who served as Smith College's first woman president from 1975 to 1985. Every fall, horticulture students plant over 2000 tulip bulbs in the surrounding beds, a memorial to Mary Mattison van Schaik, Smith class of 1931, who was an ardent supporter of the garden. Colorful annuals fill the beds during the summer.



15. Meditation Circle Where tennis courts once offered recreation in the early twentieth century, a curved planting of arborvitae frames the eastern end of the garden, providing a focal point at the end of the central axis. In the spring naturalized plantings of blue scilla cover the ground surrounding the Japanese stewartia tree, *Stewartia pseudocamellia*.



10. / 11. Friends Fountain and Outdoor Classroom



16. Paperbark Maple Grove A semicircle of paperbark maple trees, *Acer griseum*, surround the lawn facing the Jill Ker Conway Gazebo. Designed to provide a shaded area, this planting is a memorial to Marjorie Wellman Freeman, Smith class of 1916.



12. / 13. Gathering Lawn and A to Z Garden A meeting place for classes and groups, the lawn is framed with beds of perennials arranged alphabetically by scientific name for educational purposes.

17. Shade Garden Informal plantings of shade-tolerant perennials and shrubs such as rhododendrons are nestled behind the grove of paperbark maples against the rear addition of Capen House.