

The Botanic Garden of Smith College

Visitors Guide



Directions



Route 91 Exit 18. Left onto Route 5 north into the town center. Left at the first traffic light onto Route 9. Go through four traffic lights, turn left into Smith's main entrance (College Lane), just opposite the chapel. The Botanic Garden is ahead on your left. Some parking is available in front of Lyman Conservatory or along Route 9.

Hours

Lyman Plant House and Conservatory:
Open daily 8:30 am – 4:00 pm
Closed on Thanksgiving Day
Closed between Christmas and New Year's
Campus Arboretum and Gardens: Dawn to Dusk

Admission

The suggested donation is \$2. For some special events and shows there is a fee.

Accessibility

There is one designated handicapped parking space in front of the Lyman Plant House. We have two accessible entrances, a lift, and wheelchair accessible bathrooms. All greenhouses except Fern House are wheelchair accessible. For other special needs please contact us.

The Botanic Garden of Smith College



Margaret P. Holden ©1999

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Capen Garden

About the Garden

The Smith College landscape was designed over 100 years ago as a botanic garden, to be of aesthetic as well as scientific value. The Botanic Garden has served generations of students and visitors as a place of engagement, wonder, and learning.

Today, the Botanic Garden functions as a living plant museum that presents and utilizes its plant collection for education, research, display, and conservation. We maintain diverse plant collections in the Lyman Conservatory and on the 125 acre campus. Our collection contains over 7,000 labeled and mapped plants. Changing educational exhibits are featured in the Exhibition Gallery.



Amazing plants from all over the world bloom throughout the seasons

The Botanic Garden began as a collection of plants from around the world, supporting classical studies of plant systematics and physiology. In time, the Garden evolved into a landscape for learning, complete with a sizable conservatory filled with botanical wonders. Conservatory collections include cacti and succulents, ferns, epiphytes, orchids, fragrant plants, economic crops, carnivorous plants, and other tropical plants. Outdoor collections feature woody trees and shrubs, a rock garden, systematics garden, perennial garden, and herb garden. Today our plant collections are used for teaching and research at Smith College. We provide plant material to research scientists nationally and internationally. Images and information about our plant collection are available and searchable at www.smith.edu/garden.



Collections
Education
Research
Conservation

Seasonal Shows

The Spring Bulb Show runs for two weeks beginning the first Saturday in March and the Fall Chrysanthemum Show runs for two weeks starting the first Saturday in November. Show hours are 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. daily.



Tours

Free guided tours are offered for school groups and nonprofit organizations. Bus subsidies are generally available with advanced reservation and scheduling. Audio tours of the Conservatory are \$1 (free to Friends of the Botanic Garden and anyone with a Smith College ID).

Membership

Members of the Friends of the Botanic Garden enjoy many benefits and know they are supporting a worthy cause. Membership applications are available at the reception desk or online.

Thank you for visiting!

The Botanic Garden is a college campus and a living museum, not a park or recreation area. We are recognized for our diverse collection, which includes fragile, rare, and endangered plants.



For everyone's enjoyment, for your safety, and for the protection of the plants we ask:

PLEASE

- View and enjoy, but do not pick anything.
- Stay on paths and out of planting beds, and do not climb trees.
- Use caution on wet walkways and watch out for water hoses.
- Conditions in the greenhouses may be hot and humid, and bees may be present. Please be aware if this poses a risk to your health.
- Do not touch the plants; many may cause allergies.
- Do not eat plants or fruits; many are poisonous.
- Supervise children carefully; no running or shouting.
- No strollers or backpacks in the Conservatory.
- No pets.
- No picnicking in the Systematics Garden, Rock Garden, Capen Garden, President's Residence Gardens, or Japanese Garden.
- Enjoy the quiet and do not disturb the relaxing nature of the Garden.

Volunteer Opportunities

Botanic Garden volunteers lead tours, staff our reception area and exhibition gallery, develop educational materials, assist with exhibitions, and much more. Contact us if you would like to learn more about volunteering.



We reserve the right to remove any person or group whose behavior is irresponsible.

The Botanic Garden of Smith College

Over a Century of Growth

1875



The Smith campus, the former Lyman and Dewey homesteads, is a mix of gardens, orchard, hayfields, and pastures.

1893



President Seelye envisions a campus botanic garden. The Olmsted plan includes curving walkways, open space, and vistas.

1894



The first greenhouses are constructed. Beds for herbaceous plants are laid out in what will become the Systematics Garden.

1895



The new Lyman Plant House is built, including the large Victorian Palm House.

1897



The Rock Garden is established, modeled after the rockery at the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew in London.

The campus arboretum develops as an outdoor laboratory for the study of native and exotic trees and shrubs.



1905

The college acquires the Capen School and adjacent garden area, laid out as a series of outdoor garden rooms.



1921

Geneticist Albert F. Blakeslee comes to Smith in 1942 and two research greenhouses are added in 1952.



1952

Expansion of Lyman Plant House includes a new Cool Temperate House and new classrooms.



1981

The Japanese Garden for Reflection and Contemplation is built overlooking Paradise Pond.



1984

Major renovation of the Lyman Plant House updates environmental systems and adds an Exhibition Gallery.



2003

Campus Gardens & Arboretum



A Capen Garden

Located on the northeast edge of campus, this garden is essential for teaching horticulture. Features include a rustic rose arbor, perennial beds, a knot garden, and fountain. A formal gazebo, honoring Jill Ker Conway, hosts a spectacular spring display of tulips and colorful summer annuals.

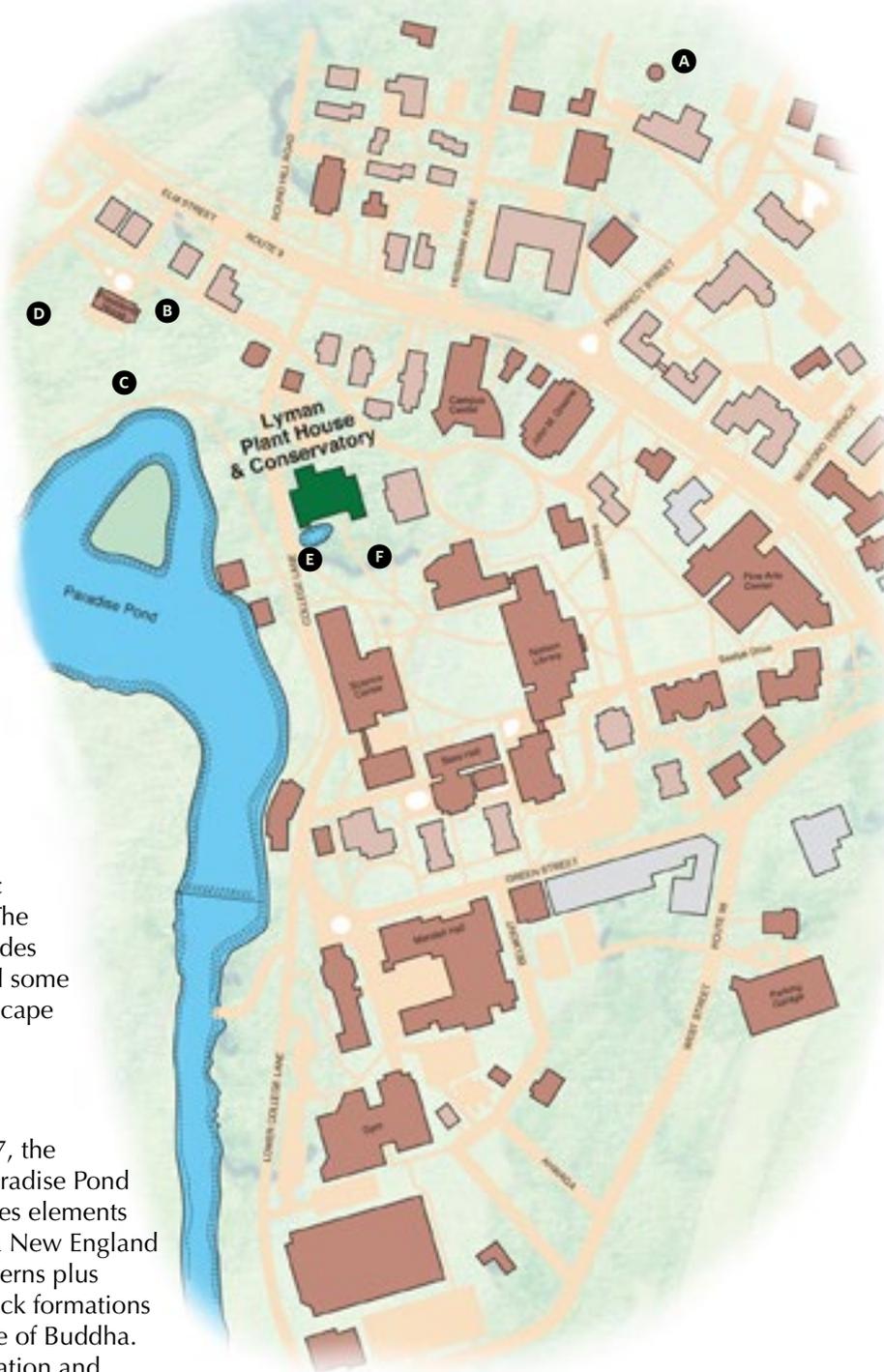


B Happy Chace '28 Garden

Gardens surround and beautify the 1920s president's residence and offer panoramic views of Paradise Pond and Mount Tom. The garden was redesigned in 2016 and includes herbs, annual and perennial displays, and some lovely mature tree specimens in the landscape around the house.

C Japanese Garden

Built in the 1980s and redesigned in 2017, the garden is situated on the hillside along Paradise Pond below the President's house. It incorporates elements of Japanese design within the context of a New England setting and features stone statues and lanterns plus rocks from the surrounding region. The rock formations are designed to represent events in the life of Buddha. Visitors are invited to pause for contemplation and scenic views of Paradise Pond and Mt. Tom.



The Campus Arboretum

The entire Smith campus is a living museum of over 1,200 types of woody plants. The collection is used for study and research, while at the same time providing a pastoral environment for learning and enjoyment. For more information on our trees please see our tree guide.



D Wildflower and Woodland Garden

Understory trees, shrubs, ferns, and wildflowers grow under a mature canopy of native hardwoods and conifers in the wooded ravine below the President's house. A path with bridges over the stream provides a means through the woodlands. Best seen in early spring.

E The Systematics Garden and Perennial Border



Beds are arranged according to evolutionary relationships, allowing students to observe and compare flower types and growth forms. Featured are economically

important, botanically interesting, and ornamental species. The adjacent Ruth Brown Richardson Perennial Border extends along the wrought iron fence.

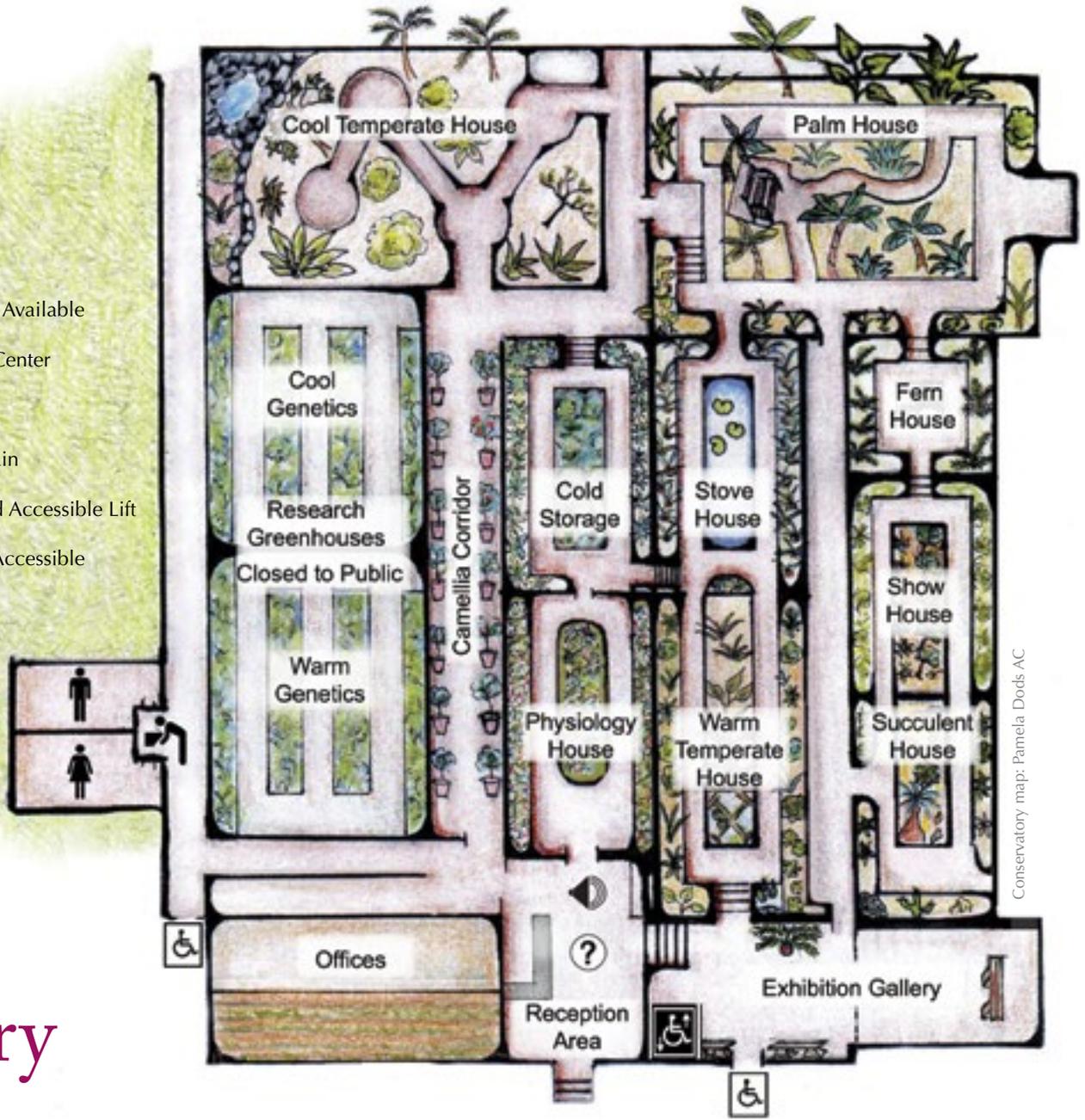
F The Rock Garden

Home to about 2,000 alpine, dwarf, and woodland plants, this garden is the most intensively cultivated area on campus. The garden was created in 1897 and was modeled after the rock garden at Kew Gardens in London. It is at its peak in April and May.



Lyman Plant House & Conservatory

-  Audio Guide Available
-  Information Center
-  Restrooms
-  Water Fountain
-  Handicapped Accessible Lift
-  Wheelchair Accessible Entrance



Conservatory map: Pamela Dods AC



Camellia japonica

Camellia Corridor

Lining the Camellia Corridor are plants that were grown in the earliest European glasshouses (called orangeries), such as camellias, citrus, orchids, agapanthus, and rhododendrons. A large collection of English ivy cultivars hangs along the wall.

Cold Storage House

Generally kept quite cool, this greenhouse serves as a rotating production house, with plants continually changing. January through early March you'll see bulbs and other plant material being forced for the Spring Bulb Show. In the summer chrysanthemums are grown and trained for the Fall Mum Show.



Amaryllis in Cold Storage

Cool Temperate House

Cooler temperatures and lower humidity levels than in the Palm House provide ideal conditions for subtropical plants from four geographic regions: Asia, Latin America, Africa, and Australia/New Zealand. Look for avocado, tea, eucalyptus, coffee, fig, and olive as well as the waterfall.



Church Exhibition Gallery

Church Exhibition Gallery

The Gallery's primary function is educational. Using an interdisciplinary approach, exhibitions are designed to present diverse horticultural and botanical themes. This melding of arts and sciences broadens visitors' knowledge and conception of plants and fosters greater understanding of their universal importance.



Fern House

Fern House

Built as a part of the 1895 expansion, today this humid greenhouse contains a collection of nonhardy ferns, fern allies, and other primitive plants such as cycads. A Wardian case and tree ferns grace the center bed.

Palm House

Fondly called the "Jungle Room" by children, this is the most popular of the Conservatory houses. Here you find plants from lowland tropical forests of the world, including rubber, cacao, banana, mahogany, and cinnamon.



Physiology House

The hundred year old slate-topped work benches are evidence of early plant physiology classes held here. Since the mid 1970s the Fall Mum Show and the Spring Bulb Show have been displayed here, Smith traditions dating from the early 1900s.



Spring Bulb Show

Show House

Once used for the Spring Bulb Show and the Fall Chrysanthemum Show, this greenhouse now holds an array of plants with foliar and floral scents—those with culinary, medicinal, perfumery, or other economic uses. There's always something in bloom here, providing color and fragrance throughout the year.



Show House

Stove House

Formerly housing a coal stove, this greenhouse contains many orchids and bromeliads, and is known for its epiphyte collection. In the center pool you can find rice, papyrus, and sugar cane, as well as tropical water lilies, which are said to display at least one flower every day of the year.

Succulent House

One of the original greenhouses built between 1892 and 1894, the Succulent House now displays plants adapted to deserts and dry habitats. It is arranged biogeographically, with plants from Europe, Africa, and Asia on the southern half, and plants from the Americas on the northern half.



Center bed of Succulent House

Warm Temperate House

Featured in this greenhouse are plants adapted to tropical and subtropical ecosystems, with an emphasis on ornamental foliage, including many common houseplants and carnivorous plants, such as Venus flytraps and pitcher plants.



Venus flytrap