

The Conservatory Garden HIGHLIGHTS



Fifth Avenue & 105th Street
New York, New York

A publication of *The Central Park Conservancy*

Spring, Vol. XVII
Issue 1, 2009

SERENE PLEASURE: THE CONSERVATORY GARDEN

10:00 am – 5:00 pm; Tuesdays – Sundays, until July 5, 2009

Visit an exhibit celebrating the Conservatory Garden at The Charles A. Dana Discovery Center, inside the Park at 110th St. between Fifth and Lenox Avenues. The Garden's history and design are revealed, and its unique plantings are detailed in glorious photography.



Malus floribunda
Crabapple

CENTRAL GARDEN

From the Vanderbilt Gate steps on Fifth Avenue and 105th Street, the view of the Central Garden encompasses a large open lawn bordered by clipped yew, a central fountain, and tiered hedges incorporated into the natural hillside. These features are hallmarks of classic Italian garden design, in which

soothing greens and the play of water serve to calm the visitor in the heat of the day.

The main gate was forged in Paris in 1894 for the Vanderbilt mansion on Fifth Avenue at 58th Street and was given to the City of New York by Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney in 1939. It

was restored in 1996 through the generosity of Arthur Ross. The crabapples flanking the lawn usually reach their peak bloom in late April. One side of each allée flowers deep pink, the other white. These trees, in full bloom, were transported down the Hudson on barges to be planted for the Garden opening in 1937.

A new yew hedge, planted in 2006, recreates the original hedge as seen in the Garden's original 1935 planting plan. It consists of 750 yews, *Taxus media* 'Hatfieldii'. Geometrical key patterns at the two western termini of the original hedge were restored. The lawn has gained the 14 feet the

old hedge had taken up and the entire Garden space has opened up dramatically.

The dark green yews are repeated, alternating with light green *Spiraea thunbergii*, in the semi-circular tiers that lead the eye up to the Wiste-

ria Pergola. The wisteria vines will sport fragrant purple blooms in May. The uppermost tier of yews was also recently replaced; it was nearly twice the height of the other tiers and obscured the view of the delicate wrought iron fence that runs the length of the Pergola.

NORTH GARDEN



Tulipa 'China Pink'

In the North Garden, ornate parterres, design symmetry, and grand floral displays combine to create a garden in the French style. Marking the entrances to this garden are four *Magnolia stellata*, Star Magnolia. Native to Japan, this medium-sized species has blooms that suffer less than other magnolias from early spring cold snaps. Hedges of *Spiraea thunbergii*, Thunberg Spiraea, along the perimeter of the Garden, typically bloom with millions of tiny white flowers in early April. The feathery foliage of this tough shrub is a soothing light green in summer and bronze in the fall, and the fine twigs are a lovely dark red in winter. Alternating with the spiraea are beds of shrub roses. White *Rosa* 'Sea Foam' is situated to the north and south and bright pink

R. 'Carefree Wonder' enlivens the east and west beds. Surrounding the entire inner section of the Garden is a tightly sheared oval of dark green *Ilex crenata*, Japanese Holly. The hedge is punctuated by four openings with arbors covered by *Rosa* 'Silver Moon,' an old-fashioned climber first planted here in 1937.

In the large sloped beds, 21,000 tulips are planted. A pattern of deep pink diamonds, formed by *Tulipa* 'Don Quichotte' runs across the creamy background of *Tulipa* 'Elegant Lady'.

Clear blue pansies line the edges of the four inner parterre beds, planted with scrolls of *Teucrium chamaedrys*, Germander. Teucrium is a common element used in knot gardens and parterres, because its small, glossy foliage takes shearing well. The pansies, which don't tolerate the summer sun and heat in this garden, are replaced with a red-leaved annual plant, *Alternanthera*, in June.

Gracing the center of the North Garden pool is the bronze fountain group, the *Three Dancing Maidens*, sculpted by Walter Schott (c.1910). The fountain came to the Garden in 1947 from Greystone, the former estate of Samuel Untermyer in Yonkers.

A lovely exit from the North Garden, opening onto to the Harlem Meer, may be taken through the Emily Mumford Gate. This gate was restored and an endowment for its maintenance established by Dr. Herbert J. Schlesinger in memory of his wife, Emily Mumford. A walk along the undulating shore of the 11-acre Meer, planted with great oaks, bald cypress and water-loving plants, will lead to the Charles A. Dana Discovery Center, where visitors can get Park information, see an exhibit, or meet for a tour of the North End of the Park.

The South Garden beds are designed in a modern American mixed-border style. Within each bed, trees, shrubs, bulbs, perennials, and annuals are placed together in seemingly informal sweeps of flowers and foliage.

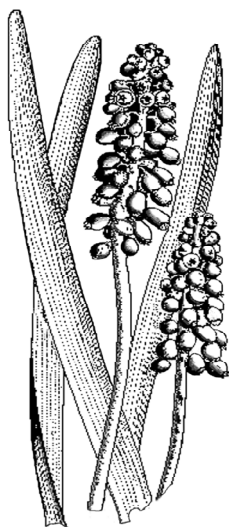
Take a minute to orient yourself to the layout of the South Garden (see map). It is built as a series of horseshoe-shaped beds with a pool at its center. The outermost horseshoe is formed by *Syringa vulgaris*, Lilac, within dark green hedges of *Euonymus* 'Manhattan,' providing a frame for the South Garden. The fragrance of the lilacs in early May can often be detected a block away on Madison Avenue.

The next horseshoe contains the perennial beds, Beds 6 – 10. Trees, shrubs, and ornamental grasses form the backbones of these beds. A young *Magnolia soulangiana* 'Galaxy,' 'Galaxy' Saucer Magnolia, has especially deep maroon undersides to its petals. A fast-growing species, this tree will reach maturity in the next ten years.

BULBS OF THE SOUTH GARDEN

The third ring of beds, Beds 1 – 5, is presently ablaze with 32 tulip varieties and 29 daffodil varieties, underplanted with many thousands of *Muscari armeniacum*, Grape Hyacinth, and blue *Anemone blanda*, Windflower.

All the bulb varieties are labeled. Each year, in addition to some tried-and-true favorites, we use an array of new bulbs. There are large, showy daffodils (officially *Narcissus*) and smaller accent plantings of some very special delicate narcissus.



Muscari armeniacum
Grape Hyacinth

The latter include tiny bicolor *N.* 'Segovia' and the fragrant yellow *N.* 'Pipit,' whose cup fades to white.

Daffodils are grouped in divisions according to size, shape, arrangement of flowers, and habit. One newcomer to the Garden this year is *Narcissus* 'Avalanche,' probably a cultivar of the antique (c.1700s) daffodil 'Seventeen Sisters,' so named because each flower stem is a bouquet of many small, fragrant white and yellow blooms. Another is *N.* 'Romance,' reputed to be among the pinkest of pink-cupped narcissus.

The outer edges of Beds 1, 2, and 5 are planted mostly with late-blooming tulip cultivars. Two new ones for 2009 are *Tulipa* 'Demeter,' a tall, mid-season tulip which has been known to continue to bloom for many years, and *T.* 'Perestroyka,' a late-blooming dusky salmon tulip with faint traces of scarlet along its pointed petals.

The pool and *Burnett Memorial Fountain* lie at the heart of the South

Garden. Its statue, restored in 1994, depicts Mary and Dickon, characters in the children's classic *The Secret Garden*, written by Frances Hodgson Burnett.

The bed surrounding the pool contains a mix of the same two tulips we used in the North Garden, *Tulipa* 'Don Quichotte' and *T.* 'Elegant Lady.'

In the middle of May, daffodils that naturalize easily are brought from the beds in the South Garden and transplanted to the Woodland Slope and the slope above the Wisteria Pergola.

Several varieties of *Crocus* also dot the slopes, as do the very early blooms of *Galanthus nivalis*, Snowdrops (tiny pure white bell flowers); *Scilla siberica*, Squill (dark-blue, star-shaped flowers); and *Chionodoxa lucilae*, Glory of the Snow (blue with a white center). *Leucojum aestivum*, Summer Snowflake, is one of our most popular bulbs, resembling a very tall snowdrop. It forms sizeable clumps after a few years.



Narcissus, 'Actaea'

EARLY PERENNIALS OF THE SOUTH GARDEN & WOODLAND SLOPE



Dicentra spectabilis
Bleeding Heart

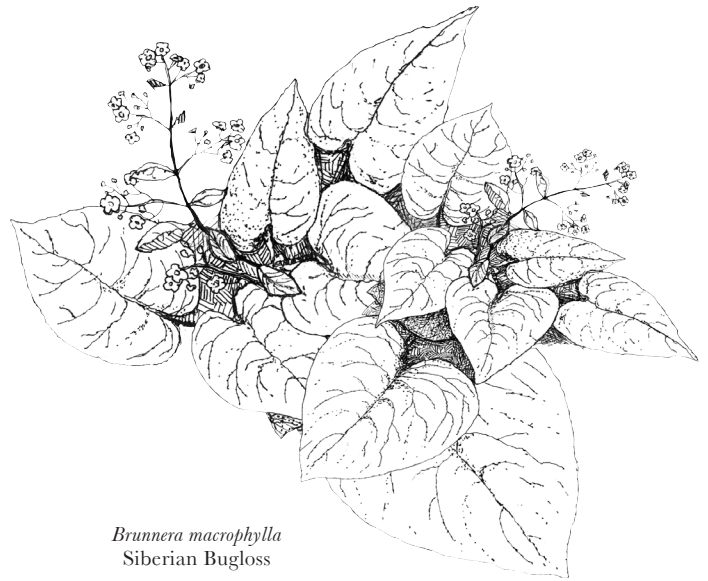
Scattered among the perennial Beds 6 – 10 and the Woodland Slope is *Dicentra spectabilis*, or Bleeding Heart. Dangling pink and white, heart-shaped blooms are held on long stems. There is also an all-white variety. The blue-green foliage yellows and dies back in midsummer.

Mertensia virginiana, Virginia Bluebells, have blue-green oval leaves topped by clusters of nodding pink flower buds that open to blue. One of the earliest blooming perennials, this native of the eastern United States will slowly colonize an area. It, too, will die back by late spring, and we often use ferns to fill the hole it leaves.



Mertensia virginiana
Virginia Bluebells

Brunnera macrophylla, Siberian Bugloss, is found throughout the Garden and is a reliable, low-maintenance edging plant that produces loosely arranged, light blue flowers which resemble forget-me-nots above the foliage. After removing the spent flower heads (deadheading) and aging foliage, you will have a mass of soothing green



Brunnera macrophylla
Siberian Bugloss

heart-shaped leaves throughout the year. A popular new variegated cultivar, whose leaves have a silver-white cast, is *Brunnera macrophylla* 'Jack Frost', found with other variegated plants, such as *Pulmonarias*, Lungworts, on the shadier backs of Beds 6,7, and 9. Lungworts are grown for their early blue flowers and leaves spotted white and silver, with many wonderful cultivars to choose from. Alchemists of the 16th and 17th centuries thought that a plant's appearance indicated its medicinal uses. Because the spotted leaves of the pulmonaria resembled a diseased lung, they were ground up and administered for pulmonary afflictions.



Pulmonarias
Lungworts

(Continued on other side, left panel)

(Continued from previous side, right panel)

Hellebores are wonderful plants, found blooming on the Woodland Slope and in the shadier spots of beds of the South Garden. Exotically colored flowers appear as early as February. The dark green foliage remains nearly evergreen for the rest of the year.

Helleborus orientalis, Lenten Rose, has large, nodding flowers that range from cream to wine colored, and are often spotted inside. After flowering, apply lots of well-rotted cow manure at the plant's base, and it will thrive for years and happily throw off many seedlings. Patience is rewarded — it usually takes three years for a seedling to reach blooming size. *Helleborus foetidus*, Bearsfoot Hellebore, has light green blooms, often with a trace of purple, and long spiky leaflets. Hellebores are among the most popular perennials today. A veritable explosion of new cultivars is now available.

The Woodland Slope offers some special spring-blooming shrubs. One of our favorites is along the path on the northernmost end of the Slope, near the brick retaining wall.

Corylopsis pauciflora, Winter Hazel, belongs in every garden, both for its pale yellow dangling blooms early in the season

and for the soft green corrugated leaves edged in red that follow. Later in the season, on the Fifth Avenue Slope near the eastern entrance to the South Garden, is a grouping of one of the most fragrant of all blooming shrubs, *Viburnum carlesii*, Korean Spice Viburnum. The clove-like scent of its small pink and white flower clusters fills the Garden.



Helleborus orientalis
Lenten Rose

GARDEN TOURS & EVENTS

PUBLIC TOURS

Meet at the Vanderbilt Gate, Fifth Avenue and 105th Street, are free, and no reservations are necessary.

Saturday Morning Tours

11:00 am; beginning April 4 through October 31, 2009

Tours highlight the history, design, and unique plantings of the 70-year-old Conservatory Garden, led by Garden Staff. (Approximately 75 mins.)

Wednesday Lunchtime Tours

12:00 pm; Wednesdays, April 29 and May 13, 2009

Spring tours feature highlights such as 45,000 tulips, daffodils, grape hyacinths, and other bulbs, as well as flowering crabapples, allées, perennials, lilacs and other shrubs.

June 17, July 15, August 19, September 9 and October 28, 2009

Summer tours feature blooming perennial and annual borders (over 250 varieties) as well as ornamental trees and shrubs.

SERENE PLEASURE: THE CONSERVATORY GARDEN

10:00 am – 5:00 pm; Tuesdays – Sundays, until July 5, 2009

Visit an exhibit celebrating the Conservatory Garden at The Charles A. Dana Discovery Center, inside the Park at 110th St. between Fifth and Lenox Avenues. The Garden's history and design are revealed, and its unique plantings are detailed in glorious photography.

FATHER'S DAY TOUR & CONCERT

Tour: 2:00 pm; Sunday, June 21, 2009

Join the curatorial staff for a tour of the Garden in early summer, when perennial beds are particularly lovely and annual beds are beginning to shine.

Concert: 3:30 pm; Sunday, June 21, 2009

Concert location: South Garden, Burnett Fountain
Enjoy a concert featuring a brass quintet from the Mannes College of Music.

GENERAL INFORMATION

The Conservatory Garden is located at:

Fifth Avenue & 105th Street, New York, New York

Central Park's official website is: www.centralparknyc.org Virtual tours of the Park, guides and maps; information on membership, volunteering, educational and recreational programs; the CPC shop; and a complete list of events in the Park can be found there.

Hours

Daily from 8:00 am until dusk.


Custom Tours

Contact Diane Schaub, Curator: dschaub@centralparknyc.org

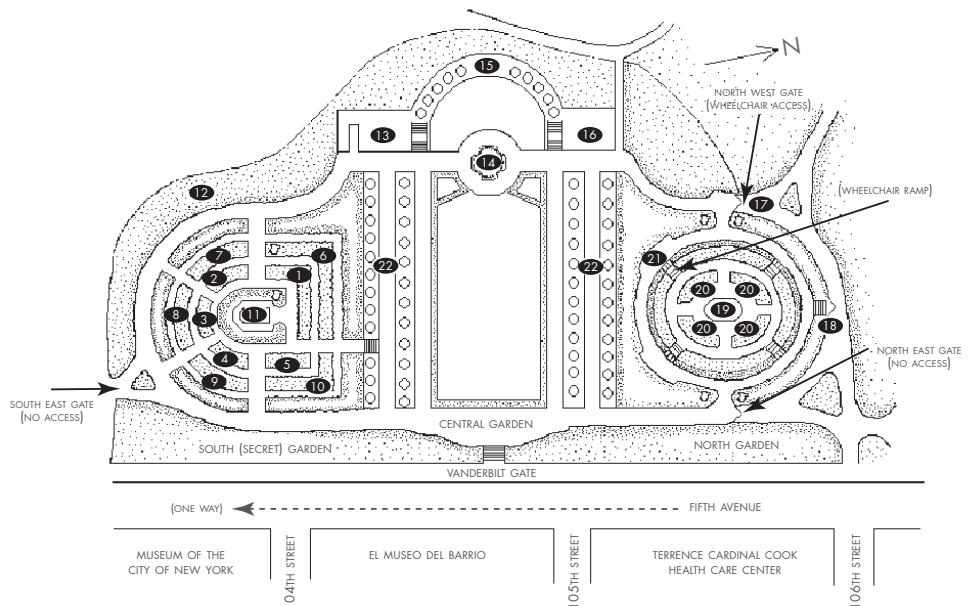
Wedding Ceremonies & Photography

The Conservatory Garden is available for wedding ceremonies and photography, as well as commercial and motion picture photography. For information, scheduling, and permits, contact: Norma Soto, Executive Assistant, 212-360-2766.

CONSERVATORY GARDEN MAP



Annual Beds	1-5
Perennial Beds	6-10
Burnett Fountain & Pool	11
Woodland Slope	12
Women's Restroom	13
Conservatory Garden Fountain	14
Wisteria Pergola	15
Men's Restroom	16
Wheelchair Access & Gate	17
Emily Mumford Gate to Harlem Meer	18
Untermeyer Fountain	19
Parterres	20
Wheelchair Access	21
Crabapple Allées	22



HOME GARDENING TIPS



Mulching: With the drought and summer heat, make sure you put down some mulch. Mulching helps retain moisture in the soil, adds to soil texture, retards weed growth, and keeps the roots of plants cool. Whatever material is used — wood chips, shredded bark or leaves, seed hulls, anything that won't mat — apply it liberally, but be sure to leave space around the crowns of plants to avoid rot.

Watering: Water in the mornings to avoid fungal growth and excessive evaporation. Water thoroughly, about one inch a week. We water at least 45 minutes at a time when soil and plants show signs of drying out. A good soak encourages deep root growth, which helps plants survive drought.

Deadheading: Most new plants can be pinched at the top to encourage bushy growth. Many established plants — including *Heuchera* (Coralbells),

Echinacea (Purple Coneflower) and *Salvias* (Sages) — will have a longer bloom time if their spent flowers are removed (deadheaded). Other plants will have fuller foliage growth if cut back after flowering, including the hardy *Geraniums*, *Nepeta* (Catmint), *Alchemilla* (Lady's Mantle), and *Brunnera* (Siberian Bugloss). The deadheading rule holds true especially for the majority of annual summer plants, like *Dahlias*, *Ageratum* (Flossflower), and *Nicotiana* (Flowering Tobacco). In order to last through the season, they need regular deadheading. Leaving flowers to go to seed directs the plant's energy away from new flower production.

Journal writing: Keep notes as the season progresses. Note which plants you like and those you don't. Bloom time? Which combinations work best? Visit other gardens and consider taking gardening classes.

GARDEN STAFF

Lynden B. Miller Director	Paul Serra Assistant Curator	Cornell Simmons Zone Gardener
Diane Schaub Curator	Alex Feleppa Sr. Zone Gardener	Norma Soto Executive Assistant
	Earl Munroe Sr. Zone Gardener	

HIGHLIGHTS

Diane Schaub: Editor and Illustrator of *Brunnera macrophylla*, *Helleborus orientalis*, *Malus floribunda*, *Mertensia virginiana*, *Narcissus 'Actaea'*, *Pulmonaria* and *Tulipa*.
David Wells: Designer

The mission of the Central Park Conservancy is to restore, manage, and enhance Central Park in partnership with the public.

The Conservancy aspires to build a great organization that sets the standard for and spreads the principles of world-class park management — emphasizing environmental excellence — to improve the quality of open space for the enjoyment of all New Yorkers.

The Conservancy is committed to sustaining this operating model to provide a legacy for future generations of Central Park users.

**CENTRAL PARK
CONSERVANCY**

www.centralparknyc.org