



BARTRAM'S GARDEN

ESCORT NOTES

In 1728, John Bartram established America's first botanic garden devoted to the collection and study of native American flora. John and his son, William, traveled from Florida to Lake Ontario to the Mississippi River collecting and studying native trees, shrubs and herbaceous plants, including rare specimens and species that would later become extinct in the wild. The Bartrams are credited with identifying and cultivating more than 200 North American plants, many of which were shared with the likes of Benjamin Franklin, George Washington and Thomas Jefferson, and the family became internationally renowned for publishing the first American plant catalog. The Bartram family's intellectual heritage is vast and far-reaching still today.

JOHN BARTRAM (1699-1777)

Born in Darby Township to a Quaker family, John Bartram became America's first great botanist, naturalist, and plant explorer. Lacking a formal education, Bartram taught himself through observation, reading and correspondence with equally inquiring minds in the colonies and abroad. From his 102-acre farm near Philadelphia, which he purchased in 1728, Bartram traveled north to Lake Ontario, south to Florida, and west to the Ohio River in search of plants and natural history specimens for his own botanic garden and for collectors at home and abroad. Bartram and his son William are credited with identifying and introducing into cultivation more than 200 native plants of North America. Their collection was displayed at Bartram's Garden for the edification and enjoyment of their frequent visitors, including George Washington and Thomas Jefferson. Together with Benjamin Franklin in 1743, John Bartram founded a society for "ingenious & Curious men," better known as the American Philosophical Society, now located at 5th & Chestnut Streets in Old City. By 1765, Bartram's international reputation earned him the notice of King George III who honored him as Royal Botanist, a position he held until his death in 1777.

WILLIAM BARTRAM (1739-1823)

The fifth of nine children born to John and Ann Bartram, William Bartram received an excellent formal education. He showed an early interest in the natural sciences and accompanied his father on numerous collecting trips. John called him "Billy, my little botanist." Following several unsuccessful attempts at business and farming, William set forth in 1773 on a four-year solitary journey through eight of the southern colonies. He made scores of drawings and took meticulous notes on the flora, fauna, and native American Indians he saw during that time. In 1791, his journals were published as Travels. The book went into several foreign editions and today is regarded as an American natural history classic. William Bartram's influence can be seen in the works of Williams Wordsworth, Samuel Coleridge Taylor, and a long line of other distinguished poets, authors, and artists. The prestigious Library of America recently added Travels to its published library of the works of great American authors. William Bartram is also credited with mentoring the first great generation of American naturalists, including Alexander Wilson and Lewis & Clark, and several present-day organizations throughout the Southern United States are committed to preserving and restoring the recreational areas along the route documented in his book Travels. You can find Charles Wilson Peale's portrait of William Bartram on display in the Portrait Gallery in the Second National Bank in Old City.

THE NEXT GENERATION

Under the leadership of John Bartram's son, John, Jr.; his granddaughter, Ann; and her husband, Robert Carr, Bartram's Garden became a flourishing commercial nursery. In 1783, the Bartrams issued the first printed plant catalogue in America and supplied plants for Independence Hall, George Washington's Mount Vernon estate, Thomas Jefferson's Monticello, and E.I. duPont's Ne-mours. In their botanic garden and greenhouses, the Bartrams eventually propagated more than 4,000 species of native and exotic plants.

ANDREW EASTWICK SAVES THE GARDEN (1850 – 1891)

It was Philadelphia industrialist Andrew M. Eastwick who had the vision to preserve the Garden for posterity. As a poor child, Eastwick had whiled away many a pleasant Sunday afternoon at the Garden, which he fondly referred to as "paradise." He hoped to some day be rich enough to buy the garden, a dream he realized in 1850, after making his fortune in the railroad industry. "I don't want a solitary branch cut," proclaimed Eastwick, who built his grand house, Bartram Hall, on a nearby hill, "so that not a bush of this beloved old garden shall be disturbed. My dearest hope is that the garden shall be preserved forever." His purchase of the site prevented its destruction from the industrial sprawl that had begun to engulf the lower Schuylkill River. Upon Eastwick's death in 1879, his former-gardener-turned-City-Councilman, Thomas Meehan, spearheaded the campaign to acquire the Bartram property, which became part of the City's public park system – referred to as the Fairmount Park Commission - in 1891.

THE BARTRAM ASSOCIATION (1893 – present)

In 1893, descendants of John Bartram formed the John Bartram Association to assist the City of Philadelphia with preservation of the site. Today, it is operated as a museum and public garden by the Association in cooperation with the Fairmount Park Commission. Ongoing conservation – of both the site's historic buildings and its landscape – is central to the Association's mission. Environmental conservation has included a reclaimed wildflower meadow, the enhancement of the botanical garden with native plant species from the Bartram period, hand-excavating and replanting Bartram's 18th-century "fish pond," and creating the first interpretive wetland on the lower Schuylkill River.

THE BARTRAM'S GARDEN SITE TODAY

Today, Bartram's Garden is a center of history and ecology that has survived centuries of change throughout Philadelphia's growth and development. The site is a living testament to 3,000 years of American history—from Lenape tribes and early Swedish settlers, to the Bartram legacy of exploration and scientific curiosity, industrialism & railways along the Schuylkill riverfront, and the rapid growth and settling of the City around a once rural outpost. Upon their drive to Bartram's Garden, visitors are invited to reflect on the changing landscape that has evolved over the centuries, while the Garden has remained a botanical refuge. Imagine the five mile journey required for Benjamin Franklin and George Washington's visits to the Garden from Old City Philadelphia on horseback. As you cross the Gray's Ferry Bridge, think back to the original Gray's Ferry, one of three ferries that crossed the Schuylkill River in the 1700s. As you approach Bartram's Garden, imagine a time when everything in your view was natural wilderness or farms. You are sure to enter the site with an appreciation of the history of this well-preserved landscape.



WHAT YOU WILL SEE

BARTRAM HOUSE

John Bartram began building his stone house shortly after he bought his farm on the banks of the Schuylkill River in 1728. He completed construction of the original four-room house in 1731, later greatly expanding the house and adding the carved stone facade between 1740 and 1770. Bartram quarried the stone himself and into his design incorporated elements based on Classical architecture including a two-story, columned portico, and hand-carved Renaissance window surrounds. An

inscription on a panel beneath his library window is a frank statement of his Deist philosophy, for which he was disowned by his Quaker meeting in 1758.

BARN

Built by John Bartram, Jr. in 1775, the handsome stone barn is the oldest barn in Philadelphia.

COACH HOUSE

A small barn during the Bartram period and a carriage house for the Eastwicks, the Coach House now provides space for meetings and educational programs.

STABLE

The Bartram's former animal stable now houses a charming Museum Shop.

SEED HOUSE

Consisting of four separately erected structures now under one roof, the Seedhouse includes an ice pit and cold cellar, a shed and greenhouse built in 1760. Visible on the south side are stone carvings by John Bartram and three openings for flues and a Franklin stove.

DOVECOTE

A rare example of an 18th century dovecote, a structure for housing pigeons.

GARDENS

* Upper Kitchen Garden – Raised beds of herbs and vegetables grown for culinary, medicinal and domestic uses.

* Common Flower Garden – Herbaceous plants and bulbs that were propagated for exchange with other collectors.

* New Flower Garden – Nursery for seeds, roots and cuttings gathered on collecting trips and received from correspondents.

* Lower Garden – Herbaceous and woody plants, all native species that were listed in the Bartrams' 1783 catalogue and subsequent editions. Look for such native beauties as Carolina Allspice, Virginia Sweetspire and Witherod Viburnum amidst a carpet of ferns and wildflowers.



FRANKLINIA TREE

John and William Bartram discovered a small grove of this tree on the Altamaha River in south Georgia in 1765. On a later trip, William brought seeds from the same location back to the garden for propagation. It was named *Franklinia alatamaha* in honor of his father's great friend, Benjamin Franklin. The tree was last seen in the wild in 1803. Nearly all *Franklinia* growing today are descended from those propagated and distributed by the Bartrams, and they are credited with saving it from extinction. The exquisite *Franklinia* provides welcome late summer color in the garden, with creamy white fragrant flowers that bloom August into September.

MEADOW

This 15-acre meadow was created on a former industrial site in the 1980s. Now filled with wildflowers, sedges, and grasses that were planted by the John Bartram Association with assistance from the Philadelphia Water Department and Philadelphia Committee of the Garden Club of America, the area is a rich bird habitat. At the base of the meadow is a new boat dock giving fishermen and visitors access to the Lower Schuylkill River. Boat cruises are also available summer through fall.

WETLAND

Thousands of native wetland plants, including bullrushes, marsh grasses, irises, hibiscuses, and marsh roses were planted in the fall of 1997 in Bartram's 1.5-acre wetland, the first interpretive and interactive wetland along the lower Schuylkill River. In addition to recreational activities, the wetland also provides new habitat for wildlife, including many migratory shorebirds, and has helped to improve the ecological health of the river.

CIDER PRESS

This foundation carved in bedrock formed the base of John Bartram's cider press (photograph circa 1895). Apples were placed in the circular trench and crushed by a revolving wooden wheel. A small hole allowed juice to drain into a round reservoir. Pomace was gathered from the trench and drawn into a wooden press that sat on the square foundation carved in the bedrock. Still intact today, it may be the only one of its kind in North America.

RIVERTRAIL BOARDWALK

This winding trail through the flood plain is bordered by wetland species such as American Sweet Gum, Green Ash, Silver Maple, River Birch, Common Alder, Black Cherry, Bald Cypress and Black Willow. The Paper Mulberry along the trail is an introduced species. Carved on nearby bedrock are tidal markings from the 1780s through 1850s.

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