

Welcome to the 18th Century Garden of the Amherst Historical Society. Located east of the historic 1700s Strong House Museum and behind the 1927 Jones Public Library, this garden is a flowering oasis in the very heart of Amherst. The Garden Club of Amherst (founded 1915) plants and maintains this delightful space for everyone to enjoy. Visitors may become acquainted with authentic colonial plant material and 1700s garden design, get ideas for their own historic house garden, or think about which plant names have been in New England for three centuries.

## Pre-Revolutionary Gardens

The two basic types of *pre-Revolutionary gardens* in New England were the cottage garden and the manor garden, depending on the needs and wealth of the owners.

The *cottage gardens*, modeled after English cottage gardens, were found in more rural agricultural towns, and were laid out between functional walls and informal paths, placed to allow easy maintenance and harvesting. Walls protected plants from harsh weather and some animals. These gardens contained practical vegetables and herbs, and useful flowers, planted neatly and informally side by side with little actual design. They gradually evolved into kitchen gardens.

The *manor gardens*, also copied from England, were developed by more prosperous people. Though more formal, these gardens were informally planted. They were often sited on the east or west side of houses, as the south side might be too hot and harsh and the north not sunny enough. They often had a long central axis path of gravel, sod, or cobblestones, as well as secondary paths. Flower beds were often edged with low clipped hedges of boxwood, ribbon grass, moss pinks, lavender, santolina, or germander.

There were focal points at either end of the central axis: these might include an arbor, summer house, sundial, statue, fence, or even a scenic vista. A tall protective hedge or fence frequently enclosed the manor garden, and its placement close to the house allowed the residents to enjoy the garden's colors and fragrance.

Beds were sometimes dedicated specifically to flowers, or to a flower and herb mix. Useful vegetables might be included or grown on a separate bed. The early manor garden was as complex, ornate, and large as the botanical interests, knowledge, or income of the owners. New England manor gardens were seldom as extensive as some of the gardens of the plantation South due to the climate here and the scarcity of hired or even slave help.

## After the American Revolution

The manor garden evolved into the *parlor garden*, which was devoted entirely to flowers. Parlor gardens were usually as wide as the house and about two-thirds as long, were fenced, and had a walk from the parlor door to the garden gate. The garden became a status symbol, in fact, it was a smaller manor garden. The remainder of the grounds maintained a more naturalistic design in the style of Capability Brown, the very influential English landscape architect of the Federal period.

## 18th Century Garden History

The Amherst Historical Society and the DAR had been meeting at the Strong House since the 1890s. Sarah Emerson and then her daughters owned it, and in 1916 left the house and gardens to the Historical Society. Soon after, Mrs. Mabel Loomis Todd, the main founder of the Historical Society, and the DAR began a correspondence with Mrs. George Churchill (Maybelle), head of the Historical Society's Grounds Committee. They planned an old-fashioned garden as a Memorial to fellow board member Anson D. Morse, a history professor at Amherst College. Mrs. Morse's generous donation allowed planting of the 18th Century Garden in 1918 with a Morse Memorial sundial as its focal point. Mrs. Churchill, a charter member of the Historical Society, guided the work. She was also the head of the Garden Section of the Woman's Club, and had spectacular gardens behind her home on Spring Street (now Five Colleges, Inc.).

Mrs. Churchill and her committee watched over the 18th Century Garden for many years, weeding, maintaining, and replanting annually where needed. She reported faithfully to the Historical Society at its annual meeting every January. In the early 1940s, Mrs. Churchill and Mrs. Civille Pray (Frances, but called Ella), both 1915 charter members of the Garden Club of Amherst, became interested in really replanting the old Strong House garden. Along with several other garden club members they formed the 18th Century Garden Committee of the Club, an ongoing committee that still purchases plants, weeds, and replants where needed each spring, and provides funds for maintenance.

In 1947, Maybelle Churchill bequeathed a then large sum of \$1,000 to the Historical Society for the upkeep of the Garden, and at their annual meeting members voted to use the money to establish and care for an authentic 18th Century Garden at the Strong House.

In 1951 the Historical Society's Garden Club Committee, under the leadership of chairman Mrs. Floyd Thompson (Marion), worked to develop a well-researched 18th Century design. From 1953 until 1956 members of both the Historical Society and the Garden Club of Amherst worked together under the inspired leadership of Lyle L. Blundell, Horticultural Chairman of the Historical Society and professor of Landscape Architecture at Massachusetts Agricultural College (now UMass). Prof. Blundell drew up a plan for a manor garden on the east side the Strong House. Every effort was taken to use only plants authentic to the period around 1750, when the Strong House was built. Blundell had two redwood benches built for the northern edge of the garden, memorials to Mrs. Ella Pray, near the Anson Morse Sundial. At the opposite end of the garden a single redwood garden seat was installed, a memorial to benefactor Mrs. Maybelle Churchill. All three benches were carved by Amherst College retired botany professor Orton Clark, using poetry chosen by Dorothy Galipeau. At the 1956 annual meeting Blundell reported that the "new old Garden was nearly completed."

In 1959 the garden was finally planted to everyone's delight. On May 21, 1961, Lyle Blundell announced that when the stonework around the sundial was completed, work on the garden would at last be finished. In September of 1961 the final stone was laid in place.

## The Garden Club of Amherst

In 1959 the Historical Society asked the Garden Club of Amherst to manage the 18th Century Garden as their own project. The Garden Club agreed to do so for a five year trial period. Funding for plant purchases and any hired help came from the Club's annual May plant sale on the town common, begun in 1951. This event continues today, still supporting this garden as well as town beautification, local libraries, environmental groups, and a UMass scholarship.

The Garden Club has managed the 18th Century Garden for more than 60 years. Each spring, current members hold a work bee, joining forces to buy and plant new and replacement plants, pick up winter trash, clean up, rake, trim, and weed the area, and edge the garden.

The garden at the historic old Strong House has long been cared for by dedicated gardeners, even by a casual summer visitor who picks up litter or pulls a weed. The success of this garden is a memorial to each of them.

## Plants in the 18th Century Garden

The following is a list of plant material found in the garden. Sometimes material may be lost or unavailable; if a plant is missing, Garden Club members will replace it in the future.

### *Scientific Name*

Achillea millefolium  
 Achillea ptarmica  
 Aconitum napellus  
 Alchemilla mollis  
 Althea rosea  
 Amaranthus caudatus  
 Amaranthus tricolor  
 Angelica archangelica  
 Antirrhinum majus  
 Aquilegia Canadensis  
 Aquilegia vulgaris  
 Artemisia arbrotanum  
 Artemisia vulgaris  
 Asclepias tuberosa  
 Baptisia australis  
 Buxus sempervirens  
 Calendula officianalis  
 Campanula persicifolia  
 Chelone glabra  
 Chrysanthemum maximum  
 Chrysanthemum motifolium  
 Chrysanthemum parthenium  
 Cimicifuga racemosa  
 Clematis paniculata  
 Cleome sp.  
 Convallaria majalis  
 Coreopsis lanceolata  
 Coreopsis verticillata  
 Delphinium elatum  
 Dianthus plumarius  
 Dictamnus alba  
 Digitalis purpurea  
 Echinacea purpurea  
 Echinops retro  
 Eryngium maritimum  
 Filipendula hexipetala  
 Gomphrena globosa  
 Gypsophila paniculata  
 Helenium autumnale  
 Hemerocallis fulva

### *Common Name*

Yarrow  
 Sneezeweed  
 Monkshood  
 Lady's mantle  
 Hollyhock  
 Love lies bleeding  
 Joseph's coat  
 Angelica  
 Snapdragon  
 American columbine  
 European columbine  
 Southernwood  
 Mugwort  
 Butterfly weed  
 False indigo  
 English box  
 Pot marigold  
 Peachleaf bell flower  
 Turtlehead  
 hasta daisy  
 Florist chrysanthemum  
 Feverfew  
 Bugbane  
 Sweet autumn clematis  
 Cleome  
 Lily of the valley  
 Tickseed coreopsis  
 Threadleaf coreopsis  
 Candle larkspur  
 Grass pink  
 Gas plant  
 Common foxglove  
 Purple coneflower  
 Small globe flower  
 Sea holly  
 Dropwort  
 Globe amaranth  
 Baby's breath  
 Common sneezeweed  
 Tawny day lily

Hosta sp.  
 Hyssopus officianalis  
 Iberis sempervirens  
 Ilex glabra  
 Iris germanica  
 Iris pumila  
 Iris sibirica  
 Kalmia latifolia  
 Lilium tigrinum  
 Lupinus perennis  
 Malus sp.  
 Mirabilis dichotoma  
 Monarda didyma  
 Myosotis sylvatica  
 Narcissus sp.  
 Nicotiana glauca  
 Nigella damascene  
 Oenothera fruticosa  
 Ornithogalum umbellatum  
 Paeonia officinalis  
 Papaver orientale  
 Philadelphus coronarius  
 Phlox divaricata  
 Phlox paniculata  
 Physostegia virginiana  
 Platycodon grandiflorum  
 Polemonium reptans  
 Primula polyantha  
 Pulmonaria angustifolia  
 Rosa sp.  
 Rudbeckia hirta  
 Sanguisorba officianalis  
 Tagetes patula  
 Tanacetum vulgare  
 Thalictrum flavum  
 Thuja occidentalis  
 Tradescantia virginiana  
 Trollius europaeus  
 Tropaeolum majus  
 Tsuga Canadensis  
 Valeriana officianalis  
 Veronica longifolia

Plantain lily  
 Hyssop  
 Candytuft  
 Inkberry  
 German iris  
 Dwarf iris  
 Siberian iris  
 Mountain laurel  
 Tiger lily  
 Lupine  
 Apple  
 Four o'clocks  
 Oswego tea  
 Forget me not  
 Daffodil  
 Flowering tobacco  
 Nigella or fennel flower  
 Sundrops  
 Star of Bethlehem  
 Common peony  
 Oriental poppy  
 Mock orange  
 Blue phlox  
 Summer phlox  
 False dragon head  
 Balloon flower  
 Greek valerian  
 Primrose  
 Lungwort  
 Old fashion climbing rose  
 Black eyed susan  
 Burnett  
 French marigold  
 Curly tansy  
 Meadow rue  
 Arbor vitae  
 Spiderwort  
 European globe flower  
 Nasturtium  
 Common hemlock  
 Garden heliotrope  
 Clump speed well

# The 18th Century Garden



Amherst History Museum  
 The Strong House  
 67 Amity Street, Amherst, MA 01002

Managed by  
 The Garden Club of Amherst

This is a facsimile garden. Its design suggests the manor garden of a family of better than moderate means in a rural community in the middle of the eighteenth century. Plant materials are as accurate to the period as is possible today.