The New Jersey State Botanical Garden at Skylands

You, too, can help protect and preserve the Botanical Garden. Please:
- NO BALLS, FRISBEES OR LAWN GAMES • NO PICNICS • NO PETS
Skylands is a carry-in, carry-out State Park facility.
Please carry your trash back out with you and dispose of it properly.

Welcome to Skylands!

You’re about to discover the Garden State’s hidden jewel.
From the delicate shades of a tiny wildflower to the vibrant colors of massed annual plantings, Skylands is a place of beauty in any season.
Here you can wander amid the elegance of formal gardens, or along gentle paths winding through the woods.
Skylands is also a safe haven for unusual plant species from around the world. The garden protects and preserves these plants as their natural habitats are changed forever by progress.
Enjoy your visit to Skylands, the New Jersey State Botanical Garden.

The Garden of the Garden State

The NJBG/Skylands Association is a member-supported non-profit organization of volunteers founded in 1976 to help the State of New Jersey preserve and restore the gardens and Manor House, and to develop programs for public education and enjoyment throughout the year.
Volunteers are always welcome.

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njbg.org

This brochure is made possible through your generous donations to the NJBG/Skylands Association.
No tax dollars have been used.

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Crabapple Vista

We have come to one of Skylands’ most spectacular attractions, the Crabapple Vista. In early May, a profusion of pink blossoms stretches a half mile up the gentle slope to the lodge. At the south end of the Vista is the horse-chestnut collection, and to the west, the Swan Pond and the Meadow, a field for moisture-loving plants such as Flag iris, as well as some of Skylands’ many varieties of willow. Higher up the slope, the trees are mainly nut trees. The Vista marks the boundary between formal gardens to the west, near the manor house, and the informal and Wildflower gardens to the east, at the foot of the Ramapo Mountains.

Along the eastern edge of the meadow note the planet signs for NJBG’s scale model Solar System, which stretches the length of the Vista. On this scale, the Earth is the size of a peppercorn.

Hosta/Rhododendron Garden

In the foreground, the Hosta/Rhododendron Garden also contains a large collection of hostas. These range in size from miniature to giant and sport various shades of blue, white, pink, and gold foliage, along with white and gold variegations. Surrounding them is a splendid collection of rhododendrons and azaleas. This Garden is at its best in late May and June.

Moriae Garden

New Jersey is home to many moraines, deposits of rock carried by glaciers at the end of the last Ice Age. Mr. Lewis created this garden mostly of ground-covering alpines which thrive on rocky slopes with water seeping beneath. Look for heather, sedums, gentians, dwarf conifers, and many low creeping plants.

Wildflower Garden

Winding wooded trails, stepping stone bridges and a frog-friendly Bog Pond make this part of the garden a favorite for picnickers. Native flowers and ferns are found throughout, with a beautiful display of Japanese primrose in late spring.

Lilac Garden

On the East Lawn, immediately adjoining the terraces, is Skylands’ spring lilac collection. It contains over one hundred varieties.

This garden is at its best near the middle of May, although some species will continue their bloom into June.

The lilac’s generic name Syringa, is derived from the Greek word for “pipe,” a reference to the hollow shoots. Lilacs belong to the family Oleaceae and therefore are related to white ash and privet. They are native to Europe and temperate Asia, where they grow as large shrubs or small trees.

Presumably, some lilacs predate Lewis at Skylands. Lilacs have been popular shrubs since Colonial times because of their ease of culture and their fragrant spring flowers. One of the first varieties to be recorded in Mr. Lewis’ plant accession book is Syringa x periclymenum, which he procured in 1923. In 1928, the Japanese tree lilac (Syringa reticulata), and the Chinese Ilia (Syringa x chinensis) were purchased along with the French hybrid “Edward André” and “Mme. Abel Chatenay.”

Peony Garden

The Memory Bench in the Peony Garden is encircled by Canadian hemlocks (Tsuga canadensis). Family ashes were to have been placed in small vials on each side of the bench, but this custom is not followed here. Vandals have stolen the bronze plates that covered the vaults.

In the Peony Garden one can trace the history of the peony, from its native place in western China. Unlike commonly known peonies, they are shrubby, with wooly stems (in China, they are called King of Flowers). Background plants range from climbers to flower showy shrubs: included Weigela, Mock Orange, Kolkwitzia and Deutzia, which were popular in Victorian times.

Summer Garden

This lovely little garden was originally the site of a rose garden. Air stagnation caused by the yew hedges made maintenance difficult, and the roses were replaced by day lilies. Because they are disease resistant, day lilies need less care and put on a colorful show during the summer months. Other summer annuals planted here vary from year to year, and you can count on a cheerful daffodil display every spring.

Skylands History

The New Jersey State Botanical Garden is the “heartland of a property that Francis Lynde Stetson (1846-1920) assembled from pioneer farmlands here in the Ramapo Mountains. Stetson named his country estate “Skylands Farm.” After his death, the Honorable Robert Roe, then commissioner of New Jersey roadsides. The result is one of thirty years, Lewis collected plants from all over the world and from New Jersey roadsides. The result is one of Lewis used the most prominent landscape architects of his day, the firm of Vitale and Grifftet, to design the gardens around his new summer home. Feruccio Vitale (1875-1933), who specialized in private estates, included Canadian hemlocks (Tsuga canadensis) in its native Japan, the tree attains a height of 120 bold dark green needles, attract great attention to this specimen because of its slow growth. On the east side of the Winter Garden dates back to the 1890’s. Along the eastern edge of the meadow note the planet signs for NJBG’s scale model Solar System, which stretches the length of the Vista. On this scale, the Earth is the size of a peppercorn.

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