



THE HARRIET BEECHER STOWE CENTER

is one of the remaining properties of the famous Nook Farm Neighborhood, a 140-acre parcel which became an enclave of activists, writers, and artists. A collection of prosperous homes situated in a parklike setting, Nook Farm embodied the emerging suburban ideal with its belief in the moral influence of nature on the home.

Gardening was a common pastime for the middle and upper class in Victorian America. A family's garden reflected their values, status, and style. The idea of "curb appeal" emerged and a tidy garden reflected positively on the owners inside.

Nature was important to Stowe's worldview and she constructed its meaning through gardening, painting, and writing. She loved gardens, and those you see here are a mix of plants and flowers she favored as well as those commonly found in Victorian gardens.

GARDEN VOLUNTEERS

Leora Berns, Cathy Conlin, Judith Lohman

SPONSORS

Funding for the Stowe Center Gardens provided by



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GREATER HARTFORD
ARTS COUNCIL

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THE HARRIET BEECHER STOWE DOGWOOD

1

In 2003, saplings propagated from this tree were planted at the oldest women's college in Japan in honor of Stowe's worldwide influence.

THE MERRILL MAGNOLIA

2

is the largest of its kind in Connecticut. This particular species withstands cold winters and blooms in early spring with fragrant, large white flowers.

OVAL BED GARDEN

3

Gardens shaped as circles and crescents were common in the 19th century. Flowers in bloom throughout the season include tulips, zinnias, cannas, and ornamental tobacco.

THE KITCHEN GARDEN

4

provided a steady supply of fresh herbs and vegetables for Stowe's recipes.

THE BLUE COTTAGE GARDEN

5

Monochromatic gardens became popular in the late 1870s. The most common were yellow or pink. The hardest to create, and thus the most desirable, was a blue garden, as blue flowers were the rarest. Everything from pale blue-gray to deep violet was considered "blue."

THE WILDFLOWER GARDEN

6

Stowe loved wildflowers. She planted them, picked them, and painted them. Well into her 80s, Stowe enjoyed walking through fields gathering bouquets of them. Her love of wildflowers translated into a relaxed approach to her gardens, and she often referred to them as her "jungles."

CURB APPEAL

7

Like other Victorians, Stowe connected gardening to morality. In *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Stowe described Uncle Tom as a man who kept a good garden with his home "covered by a large scarlet bignonia and a native multiflora rose..." and a front yard filled with "marigolds, petunias, [and] four-o'clocks." She created an image of virtuous domesticity to help readers empathize with her enslaved hero.

THE HIGH VICTORIAN GARDEN

8

Elephant ears and castor bean plants typify the exotic plants Victorians preferred. Exotic plants that required continuous maintenance was a sign of wealth and sophistication.

HERITAGE ROSES

9

The hedges on either side of the drive contain a variety of fragrant heritage roses that bloom in early June. In 2010, the Stowe Center was awarded the Garden Club of America's Jane Righter Rose Medal for this collection.

THE PINK & RED GARDEN

10

Fads of the early 20th century included "grandmother gardens," plots filled with climbing roses, phlox, peony, hibiscus, iris, hollyhocks, and dahlia, that gardeners imagined had populated the gardens of colonial New England.

EARLY 20TH CENTURY LANDSCAPE DESIGN

11

Katharine Seymour Day, Stowe's grandniece and Stowe Center founder, planted lush gardens during her residency here. The rhododendrons, mountain laurel, and National Champion Common Pawpaw tree are remnants of this early 20th-century landscape design.



SOLITARY GARDEN

This season, the Stowe Center collaborates with New Orleans artist Jackie Sumell on a garden in honor of Stowe Prize 2020 winner Albert Woodfox for his memoir *Solitary*. This garden is the same shape and size (6' x 9') as the solitary confinement cell where Woodfox spent 43 years.

Solitary Garden is built from the largest chattel slave crops of the 19th-century South—sugarcane, cotton, indigo, and tobacco—mixed with lime from a historic Connecticut mine. The plants are flowers from Stowe's historic gardens and from her description of those growing outside Uncle Tom's cabin. This artwork expresses confinement as well as hope, love, and imagination.

The Stowe Center thanks the Greater Hartford Arts Council for funding the Solitary Garden art installation.



Scan the QR code for more information.

The GARDENS AT THE HARRIET BEECHER STOWE CENTER

A SELF-GUIDED EXPERIENCE

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