

otic plants Victorians preferred. The planting of exotic plants that required a lot of maintenance was a form of conspicuous consumption - they were status symbols and indicated both wealth and sophistication.

9 *Walk past the front of the Katharine Seymour Day House and stop at the far end of the porch.*



The Stowe rose gardens contain a variety of different roses that are included in the annual Great Hartford annual rose and garden weekend each June. In 2005, the Greater Hartford YWCA chose the Harriet Beecher Stowe Center as the site for its *Rose of Peace*, now marked with a plaque.



10 *Walk back along the front of the Day House porch and stop at the edge of the house.*

These gardens are not original to the Stowe House property. The current gardens are based on colonial revival gardens of early-to mid-twentieth century and include butterfly bushes, climbing roses, and annual flowers that change each year.



*Continue along the paved walkway toward the Visitor Center.*



Katharine Seymour Day, Harriet Beecher Stowe's grandniece, planted lush colonial revival gardens during her residency here, and the rhododendrons, and mountain laurel are the remnants of that early twentieth-century landscape design. The gardens at the Stowe Center reflect both Stowe's personal favorite plantings and the trends of her time period.

Thank you for taking the time to explore our gardens. Feel free to remain in the gardens as long as you like. In our Visitor Center you will find books and other gifts related to Stowe and the gardens at the Harriet Beecher Stowe Center. Please visit [HarrietBeecherStowe.org](http://HarrietBeecherStowe.org) or join us for a tour of her home to learn more about the woman whose words changed the world.

**The Harriet Beecher Stowe Center preserves and interprets Stowe's Hartford home and the Center's historic collections, promotes vibrant discussion of her life and work, and inspires commitment to social justice and positive change.**

# The Gardens of the Harriet Beecher Stowe Center

## *A Self-Guided Walking Tour*



*"A garden is a place of healing for the soul."* Published in *The Independent*, 1855



HARRIET  
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*Her words changed the world.*

77 Forest Street • Hartford, Connecticut 06105  
860-522-9258 • [www.HarrietBeecherStowe.org](http://www.HarrietBeecherStowe.org)

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 literary and artistic people and social reformers. The semi-forested pasture was ideal for creating a picturesque landscape of woods, curved paths, rocky outcroppings, and gothic-style houses. Stowe, author of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, was one of Nook Farm's most prominent residents.



Gardening was a common pastime in Victorian America. A family's garden reflected their values and style. Children were taught to garden to build moral character, teach self-improvement and strengthen work ethic. The idea of "curb appeal" emerged and a tidy garden reflected positively on the owners inside. As gardening became more popular, a division of labor appeared between men and women - Gentlemen were to grow vegetables while ladies were to grow flowers.

During Stowe's residence at Nook Farm gardens expanded as it became popular to fill as much empty space as possible. Gardens were meant to be places that showed the owners care and commitment. Gardeners became creative and began to breed plants together in order to create visually interesting flowers. Pride in their work was important and gardeners began to enter garden and flower shows competing for prizes and accolades.

Stowe loved gardens and those you see here are a mix of plants and flowers she favored and grew in her garden, and common Victorian garden-types popular during Stowe's time.

### Begin your exploration at the Visitor Center:

#### 1 Walk down straight path toward the back of the Stowe House.



The Stowe Dogwood™ *cornus florida rubra* is thought to have been planted while Stowe lived at 77 Forest Street. We won't know this for sure until after the tree dies. The Dogwood became a registered trademark after saplings were created from graftings and cuttings. The first of these was planted at the first women's college in Japan in honor of Stowe's worldwide influence.

#### 2 Continue on the path for about 15 feet.

The Merrill Magnolia is officially the largest in Connecticut. This particular species is able to withstand cold winters. It blooms early in the Spring with large white flowers.



#### 3 Continue on the path for about 10 feet.

Gardens shaped as circles, crescents, etc., were prominent by the 1820s. Single-specie beds became very popular by the 1870s. In the early spring, this garden is planted with tulips. The flowers that bloom here change with the seasons.



#### 4 Turn to face the back of the Stowe House.

This was Stowe's back yard. Stowe used this area to grow herbs for her kitchen. Stowe favored flower gardens over kitchen gardens, and published an article on this opinion.

#### 5 Take a right and walk down the bluestone pathway to the side of the house.

The Blue Garden (left): Thematically colored gardens became popular in the late 1870s. The most common were all yellow or all pink. Some advice books thought that all-red gardens were in poor taste. The hardest to create, and thus the most desirable, was an all-blue garden, as blue flowers were the most rare. Everything from pale blue-gray to deep violet was considered "blue."



#### 6 Look to your right.

The Wildflower Garden: Stowe loved wildflowers. She planted them, picked them, and painted them. The Reverend Joseph Twichell remembered that, even as an 80-year-old, Stowe liked to walk through fields gathering bouquets of wildflowers. Stowe took a relaxed approach to her gardens, referring to them as her "jungles."



#### 7 Continue on the path to the front of the Stowe House.

Stowe, like other Victorians, connected gardening to morality. She believed that an attractive yard implied "nice" people lived indoors. In her famous anti-slavery novel, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Stowe described the title character, Uncle Tom, as a man who kept a good garden, and his home as a small building with a façade "covered by a large scarlet begonia and a native multiflora rose..." with a front yard filled with "marigolds, petunias, [and] four-o'clocks," she created an image of virtuous domesticity to help her readers identify with her enslaved heroes. Stowe's ability to humanize the characters in her novel changed the way many viewed the institution of slavery, and influenced the abolitionist movement before the Civil War.

#### 8 Continue straight past the front porch and onto the grass.

The High Victorian Garden: Elephant ears and castor bean plants typify the ex-