

HISTORIC GARDENS

Wander through Colonial Williamsburg's Historic Area and discover the variety of 18th-century gardens. The 90 acres of gardens and green spaces range from the formal splendor of the Governor's Palace garden to the utilitarian kitchen garden of Wetherburn's Tavern to the tranquil Colonial Revival garden of the Orlando Jones site.



When the restoration of Williamsburg began in the 1920s, Colonial Williamsburg's first landscape architects sought inspiration from English Anglo-Dutch gardens and carefully studied surviving colonial gardens of the American South. Archaeological excavations were undertaken to locate potential landscape features.

The majority of Colonial Williamsburg's gardens were planted between the 1930s and 1960s. A renewed public interest in our colonial past began to stimulate the preservation of old homes, resulting in the Colonial Revival style.

Today, more emphasis is placed on social history and showing how the colonists lived and worked as a community. Ongoing research and new archaeological techniques provide more information about 18th-century Williamsburg gardens and a better understanding of their uses. This better

understanding of colonial gardens is reflected in the design and interpretation of the Historic Area gardens.

Then, as today, gardens were as varied as the people who created and tended them. Through these re-creations and Colonial Williamsburg's garden programs, guests have an opportunity to learn about gardens and gardening in 18th-century Williamsburg. Colonial Williamsburg hopes that everyone who visits will gain an understanding of the wide spectrum of horticulture that was practiced in the colonial capital.

Colonial Williamsburg

COLONIAL WILLIAMSBURG'S HISTORIC GARDENS

1 Dr. Barraud House—The reconstructed garden incorporates three small, formal spaces and a natural, or wild, garden. Archaeological investigations on the site revealed foundations of several outbuildings, elaborate storm drains, brick pavements, and marl walks. In fact, the marl walks in the garden were some of the best preserved in Williamsburg, giving a clear indication of the garden's original layout.

2 Bassett Hall—This 18th-century house served as the Williamsburg home of Mr. and Mrs. John D. Rockefeller Jr. during the early years of the restoration of Colonial Williamsburg. As part of recent renovations, the gardens have been re-created as they appeared in the 1940s. Three original outbuildings flank the east side of large flowerbeds that are planted with bulbs in the spring and mums in the fall. A boxwood vista leads from the teahouse to the woodlands in the distance.

3 John Blair House—Through much of his life, John Blair Sr. kept a diary in which he recorded his interest in gardening. In May 1751, he had loaned Peyton Randolph his gardener, of whom “Mrs. Randolph gave a fine account.” Landscape architect Arthur A. Shurcliff chose to design the kitchen dooryard as a small herb garden, reminiscent of the “physick” gardens popular in the 17th century. The parterres are filled with fragrant herbs.

4 Bracken Tenement—The street fence reflects the break indicated on the Frenchman's Map, an 18th-century billeting map of Williamsburg. The garden design has been kept simple with a small parterre immediately to the rear of the house. Yaupon holly has been used in three different ways here—as an enclosing hedge, as topiary accents, and as a free-growing screen.

5 Bryan House—An arbor covered with trumpet honeysuckle and American wisteria offers a splendid view of the boxwood parterres. This Colonial Revival garden was based on garden patterns depicted on Claude Joseph Sauthier's maps of North Carolina towns of about 1769. Sauthier, a French landscape gardener who came to North Carolina in 1767, surveyed and drew plans for several of that colony's towns.

6 Christiana Campbell's Tavern—Arthur A. Shurcliff's successor, Alden Hopkins, designed a beautiful Colonial Revival garden beside the tavern. Its geometric pattern features nine planting beds with a tiered yaupon holly topiary in the central circle. Flowering dogwoods, oak leaf hydrangeas, and red cedars create seasonal interest.

7 Elizabeth Carlos House—The pleasure garden is a typical four-square pattern employing a wellhouse as focal point. The wellhead is not precisely in the center of the space, but offset to allow the central path to pass in front of the well. A carefully trimmed hedge of yaupon holly surrounds the otherwise symmetrical garden.

8 Coke-Garrett House—The Coke-Garrett House was described in the 18th century as a “long frame house” with “beautiful gardens surround[ing] the estate.” Today, stately evergreens, nut trees, and old boxwood enclose the area behind the house and lead down a grassy ramp to a flower border on the lower garden level.

9 The Colonial Garden and Nursery—The garden displays many rare and unusual varieties of heirloom vegetables and fruits, North American and European herbaceous plants, and an herb garden with examples of household herbs used by the colonists. Costumed gardeners educate guests on 18th-century Virginia gardening, tools and techniques.

10 Alexander Craig House—Gardens and outbuildings were mentioned in the recorded deeds for this original house. Today the pleasure garden with seasonal color provides an attractive foreground to the orchard's fruit trees, pleached arbors, and the original brickbat paths.

11 Custis Tenement—Because of the scarcity of archaeological evidence of a colonial-period garden on this site, landscape architect Arthur A. Shurcliff again turned to Claude Joseph Sauthier's 18th-century maps for a pattern and style for the present garden. The parterre garden, partially enclosed by English boxwood, features formal paths made of crushed shell and brick.

12 Thomas Everard House—Archaeological investigations on the site revealed the original brick paving behind the house. Analysis suggests that the oldest of the English boxwood in the adjacent pleasure garden date to about 1850.

13 James Geddy House—Among the items listed in the inventory made at the time of James Geddy Sr.'s death in 1774 were “3 potting pots, 1 garden water pot and 4 water pales.” As tradesmen, the Geddys were probably not doing extensive gardening, but the presence of garden implements suggests at least some effort, most likely the cultivation of vegetables and herbs.

14 Governor's Palace—The complex of gardens, spread over 10 acres, resembles English country estates during the reign of King William III and Queen Mary II. Three original features from the 18th century remain: the ice mount, the falling gardens (terraces), and canal.

15 Orlando Jones House—The presence of a garden is based on the 1745 advertisement in the *Virginia Gazette* that indicates the existence of one at that time. The garden designed in 1939 by landscape architect Arthur A. Shurcliff has remained almost unchanged since that time.

16 King's Arms Tavern—The work yard has been designed as an outdoor dining area. Evergreens have been assembled to provide a bower around and over the area. An arbor completes the picture, providing deep shade in the summer. In the kitchen garden, the crosswalks meet at a round bed planted with chokeberry, which is edged on the outside with cordoned fruit trees.

17 David Morton House—The position of the house and outbuildings, as shown on the Frenchman's Map and substantiated by archaeological excavations, was the determining factor in re-creating the garden. The symmetrical formal garden features boxwood parterres, a covered well and pump, and an arbor covered with muscadine grapes.

18 Palmer House—Tucked beside the home is a symmetrical pleasure garden designed around a central sundial. Oyster shell pathways define four circular beds planted with perennial bulbs and shade-loving perennials. Surrounded by boxwood hedges, the garden offers passersby a secluded spot in which to spend a lazy afternoon.

19 Pasteur & Galt Apothecary—Although there is a reference that Dr. Galt loved flowers and grew opium poppies, advertisements in the *Virginia Gazette* reveal that the two doctors relied primarily on exotic imports from Europe to soothe the body and mind. The “simples” seen in the garden today are representative of herbs known and used in the colony during this period.

20 Benjamin Powell House—The Powell garden illustrates the axial arrangement of garden spaces typical of colonial site development. Behind the small pleasure garden and separated by the work yard is a kitchen garden featuring vegetables in season.

21 Prentis House—The property is an excellent example of the fullest degree of garden development within the confines of a typical one-half-acre lot. The pleasure garden, behind the service yard, has been designed with six parterres edged in yaupon holly. The simple kitchen garden parallels the pleasure garden on the east, and a small orchard near the back street is balanced by the stable and paddock at the rear of the site.

22 Alexander Purdie—The Purdie work yard is dominated by a variety of outbuildings, or dependencies. The pleasure garden features a simple four-square design with 16 identically sheared yaupon topiaries within four turf panels defined by brick crosswalks. Plants of seasonal interest include shadblow trees, pomegranates, and oak-leaf hydrangeas.

23 George Reid House—The Reid House is unique in being set back from the front property line by eight feet. The lot has four sections: a service yard directly behind the house; a kitchen garden featuring heirloom flowers, vegetables, and herbs; an orchard; and a paddock with a stable fronting on Francis Street.

24 Taliaferro-Cole House—Thomas Crease, a gardener in 18th-century Williamsburg, lived on this site for a total of 35 years. The topography of the site is largely unchanged from his time. The garden consists of three separate rectangular areas enclosed by fencing, each planted for a different purpose.

25 Wetherburn's Tavern—Behind the kitchen and adjacent outbuildings is a simple square kitchen garden with a central path. The contents of a well on the site, examined during archaeological investigations, were found to include the pits, seeds, and other remains of several common fruits and vegetables.

26 George Wythe House—Surviving letters reveal that Wythe was interested in fruit culture, but his wife apparently was in charge of the kitchen garden. Today a kitchen garden, orchard, and the service yard with dependencies flank each side of the pleasure garden. A pleached American hornbeam arbor terminates the main garden path.