Bartholdi Park

Bartholdi Park, a two-acre garden on the south side of the Conservatory, serves as a demonstration garden where visitors can learn to apply the latest horticultural techniques to their home landscapes. In geometrically arranged beds that complement the magnificent classical fountain designed by Frédéric Auguste Bartholdi, the garden features perennials and annuals in innovative combinations. The plantings are constantly updated to showcase new varieties, design trends, and garden maintenance methods.

Every type of plant is represented in Bartholdi Park—deciduous trees, evergreens, shrubs, perennials, annuals, vines, ground covers, roses, and bulbs. An urban microclimate, created by the southern exposure of the garden and the shelter of surrounding buildings, sustains many otherwise tender plants through most of the year. At each entrance, plants are positioned to frame the fountain, which is surrounded from spring to fall by colorful flowers. Gardens are designed in a variety of styles to complement distinct themes. Each garden uses trees and shrubs as backdrops for the showy blossoms of annuals and perennials. The largest theme garden, the Heritage Garden, uses hardy species native to North America to encourage wildlife-friendly gardening.

Bartholdi Park is also a refuge—an island of green where visitors, office workers, and a surprising diversity of birds and pollinators can find respite from the stresses of the city. Secluded benches offer quiet shade in the summer and sheltered sunlight in the winter. In warm weather, the splash of the fountain rhythmically underscores the chirps of nesting birds and the drone of busy insects. In every season, the colors and textures of the plants and flowers are exhilarating. And few park benches in the world offer such stately vistas, with the crystal roof of the Conservatory vying with the Capitol dome for a visitor's attention.

(above)
Rose
(*Rosa* 'Alchymist').
U.S. Botanic Garden

(opposite)
Bartholdi Park
in midsummer.

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(above)

American Parterre.

Two stately rows of Japanese holly (*Ilex crenata* 'Sky Pencil') form a path to the fountain. Vigorous rosemary bushes (*Rosmarinus officinalis* 'Salem') surround the American Parterre bed that features a formal arrangement of perennials.

(opposite)

Tulips
(*Tulipa* 'Gudoshnik').

(left)

Bartholdi Park.

The benches and tables set out in warm weather are popular for picnics and meetings.

(above left)
Trifoliate orange (*Poncirus trifoliata*).

(above right)
Irises and giant allium (*Allium giganteum*).

(left)
Tulips and pansies surround Bartholdi Fountain in spring.

(far left)
Secluded benches.

(opposite)
Spring flowers in the Romantic Garden.

HABITAT

(opposite)

Heritage Garden.

Native plants flourish in the Heritage Garden. Signs describing sustainable gardening practices are placed throughout the beds to help home gardeners create healthy backyard habitats. The Heritage Garden was named as the 10,000th registered Backyard Wildlife Habitat by the National Wildlife Federation.

(above left)

American beautyberry (*Callicarpa americana*).

(above right)

Summer garden.

Plants including hydrangea (*Hydrangea* 'Blue Wave'), garden phlox (*Phlox paniculata* 'Becky Towe'), lamb's ears (*Stachys byzantina* 'Big Ears'), and Shasta daisy (*Leucanthemum* x *superbum*) thrive alongside native plants in the Heritage Garden.

(above)

Garden observations.

Keeping a daily notebook of plant observations is essential for a well-managed garden.

(right)

Yearly visitor.

Camouflaged among fading tulip stalks and pansies, a mother duck hides her nest.

(above left and right)
Autumn in Bartholdi Park.

(left)
A bumblebee pauses on a pomegranate.

(near left)
Birdbath.

(opposite)
Japanese blood grass (*Imperata cylindrica*).

(opposite, above, and left)

Urban oasis.

Bartholdi Park is a refuge in the midst of the nation's capital. From a park bench, a visitor can see the Washington Monument, the National Museum of the American Indian, and the Capitol dome.

(above)

Cardoon (*Cynara cardunculus*).

The National Museum of the American Indian appears beyond the flourishing cardoon.

(left)

The Bartholdi Fountain at Christmas.

Bartholdi Fountain

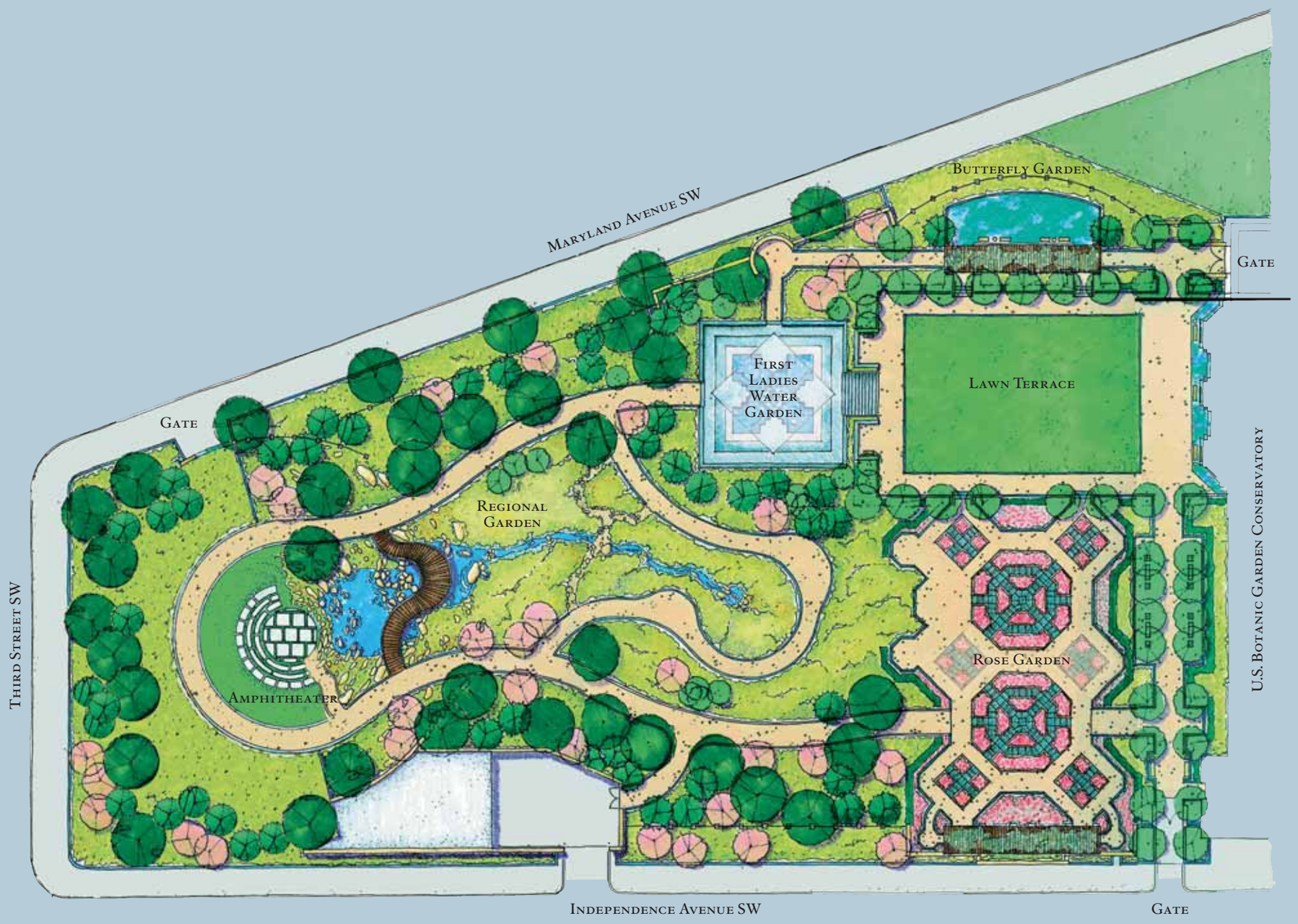
The Bartholdi Fountain was created by Frédéric Auguste Bartholdi (1834–1904), the French sculptor who also designed the Statue of Liberty. It was first exhibited in Philadelphia at the International Exposition of 1876. The fountain was purchased by the U.S. Congress in 1877 for $6,000 and placed on the Botanic Garden grounds, then situated in the center of the Mall. Moved to its present location in 1932, the Bartholdi Fountain was restored in 1986.

The fountain, intended to be an allegorical representation of water and light, is designed in three identical sections with classical forms and symbols. Turtle-like aquatic monsters and large shells surround the base. The pedestal holds three sea nymphs rising on their toes, and fish spout water between them. The nymphs seem to hold the large basin, which is actually supported by the central column. Above the basin, three youthful tritons playfully hold out seaweed. Water spills from a crown at the very top into the upper basin, while jets shoot from the mouths of the fish and turtles.

The cast-iron fountain, painted to look like bronze, weighs 40 tons and is 30 feet high. It was originally lit by 12 gas lamps, making the fountain one of the first nighttime attractions in the city. These lamps were replaced by battery-powered electric igniters in 1881. The lights surrounding the large basin were added in 1885, and the fountain was completely electrified in 1915.

(above)
Bartholdi Fountain from above.
Architect of the Capitol

(opposite)
Bartholdi Fountain in afternoon light.


Maryland Avenue SW
Butterfly Garden
Gate
First Ladies Water Garden
Lawn Terrace
Gate
Regional Garden
Rose Garden
Amphitheater
Third Street SW
U.S. Botanic Garden Conservatory
Independence Avenue SW
Gate