

RESTORATION OF THE CONSERVATORY GARDEN

Celebrating 35 Years of the Women's Committee



THE CONSERVATORY GARDEN | A Women's Garden

In honor of their 35th Anniversary and in collaboration with Central Park Conservancy's Campaign, *Forever Green: Ensuring the Future of Central Park*, the Women's Committee of Central Park Conservancy has committed to raise at least \$5 million towards a transformative \$10 million initiative to restore the Conservatory Garden, Central Park's six-acre masterwork of formal garden design, located off Fifth Avenue from 104th to 106th Streets.

History

Completed in 1937 under Parks Commissioner Robert Moses' chief landscape architect Gilmore D. Clarke, the Conservatory Garden became Central Park's only formal garden. The original plans were designed by aptly-named landscape architect M. Betty Sprout, who later became Clarke's wife.

In the latter part of the 19th century, the area originally hosted a small nursery for growing plants for the Park. The name "Conservatory Garden" was adopted in 1898 when a large conservatory (greenhouse) was constructed on the site, featuring then-exotic tropical plants and ornate flower beds. After falling into disrepair, the greenhouse was demolished in 1934 and the exceptional six-acre formal outdoor garden that we now know was conceived and built.

Thanks to its original designers and the Conservancy's substantial 1983 restoration of the Garden's horticultural elements, the Garden stands as one of the world's great masterworks of formal garden design. Since its earliest days, horticultural direction has been in the hands of women, including Lynden Miller, who led the 1983 restoration, and long-time Garden curator Diane Schaub.

The Garden is divided into three smaller gardens, each with a distinct style: Italian, French, and English. Its main Fifth Avenue entrance features the magnificent wrought-iron Vanderbilt Gate. Designed by American architect George B. Post and crafted in France in 1894, the Gate originally adorned the mansion of Cornelius Vanderbilt II at Fifth Avenue and 58th Street. In 1939, Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney, founder of the Whitney Museum of American Art, gifted the Gate to the City.

The Italian-style garden is composed of a large lawn surrounded by yew hedges and bordered by two exquisite allées of spring-blooming pink and white crabapple trees. A 12-foot high jet fountain plays on the western end of the lawn, backed by tiered hedges and stairs leading to a wisteria pergola.

The northern, French-style garden showcases parterres of germander and spectacular seasonal displays of tulips and Korean chrysanthemums, all within an ellipse of Japanese holly. In the center is the Untermyer Fountain, featuring the *Three Dancing Maidens* fountain by German sculptor, Walter Schott.

To the south lies the intimate English-style garden. There are five mixed borders of trees, shrubs and perennial plants, and five seasonal beds featuring spring bulbs that are followed by annual flower displays. At the center, within a water-lily pool, is sculptor Bessie Potter Vonnoh's lovely Frances Hodgson Burnett Memorial Fountain, a tribute to the author of the children's book, *The Secret Garden*.

The Initiative

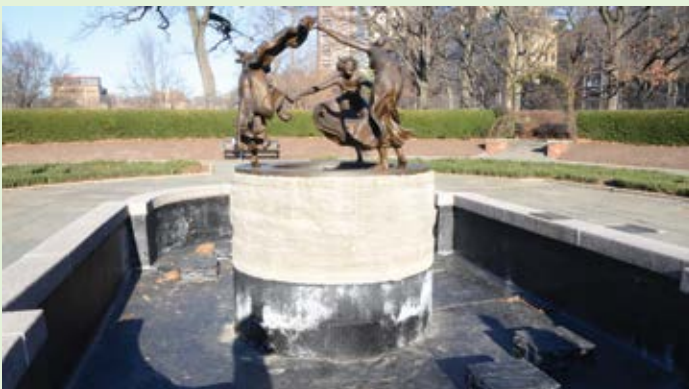
The Garden's last significant restoration was in 1983, focusing primarily on the redesign of its tour-de-force of horticultural elements. Today, diminished by decades of wear and tear, the Conservatory Garden is in need of additional upgrades and repairs. The current \$10 million restoration will be largely focused on the comprehensive improvement of its hardscapes—which are almost all original to the Garden's 1937 construction. This will include the extensive network of paths and plazas that gracefully traverse the Garden, as well as other much-needed infrastructure upgrades.

Planned Improvements

- The restoration of the Garden's distinctive pavements, including the concrete walkways and expansive bluestone patterns



- Extensive infrastructure upgrades and modernization of the fountain systems, including those of the Untermyer and Burnett fountains



- The refurbishment of a number of the Garden's unique architectural and decorative features, including the full restoration of the wisteria pergola





Donor Recognition

Central Park Conservancy is pleased to offer a selection of recognition opportunities for supporters of the restoration of the Conservatory Garden.

Naming opportunities for leadership gifts are also available including: the Lawn, the Pergola, the Fountain, and the Crabapple Allées, all located in the Italian-style garden.



The Lawn



The Pergola



The Fountain



Crabapple Allées

Donors will be acknowledged in the Central Park Conservancy Annual Report; in select Women's Committee 35th Anniversary printed materials; and on the Central Park Conservancy website.

Donors may make a gift of cash, securities or a multi-year pledge.

Thank you for your generous consideration of support.

Hats Off to the Women's Committee

The Frederick Law Olmsted Awards Luncheon has been hosted by the Women's Committee on the large yew-framed lawn of the Italian-style garden for over 25 years. A New York City fixture of style and elegance, the annual fundraising luncheon, whose humble beginnings date back to 1983—when 300 Park friends gathered at Tavern on the Green and raised \$175,000—now attracts over 1,250 attendees and raises over \$3.5 million each year for the care of the Park.



Frederick Law Olmsted Awards Luncheon in Conservatory Garden

About the Women's Committee

The Women's Committee is a group of dynamic women who are dedicated to the beautification and preservation of Central Park. Founded in 1983, the Women's Committee has been instrumental in increasing awareness and raising funds for many Park projects including the reconstruction of the Charles A. Dana Discovery Center, the renovation of Safari Playground twice, and recreation of the urns at Bow Bridge. The Women's Committee raises nearly 15 percent of Central Park Conservancy's annual Parkwide budget. The Women's Committee is proud to host four of New York's premier charitable events: the Frederick Law Olmsted Awards Luncheon, the Fall Luncheon, the Annual Family Party in Heckscher Playground, and the Playground Partners Winter Luncheon. The Committee is also responsible for the operation of a number of Parkwide programs including Adopt-A-Bench, Tree Trust, Playground Partners, Tulips and Daffodils, Perimeter Association, and Conservancy Docents.

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