

Visualizing
Beatrix Farrand's
Plant Book for Dumbarton Oaks

Melissa Elliott / Dumbarton Oaks Garden and Landscape Studies Internship / Summer 2011

Beatrix Farrand's Plant Book for Dumbarton Oaks

Path Edging from the South Gate of the Fountain Terrace to the Orangery

"Cocky-Locky's Garden" has, in time, changed from the desired grotesque to the demure, and therefore blends into the landscape rather than forming an element of surprise. The large white oak still stands.

At either side of the gate leading out of the Fountain Terrace, and balancing the Hollies on the north side of the wall, two Box plants are the markers on the south side of the wall between which the walk leads straight toward the big Apple tree. If this Apple tree should ultimately have to be replaced, another one should be planted, as the trunk of this tree as seen from the garden seems to be a wise interruption to the perspective that leads on to the "Terrior" Column and its vase.

Outside and southeast of the high Rose Garden wall, one or two *Magnolia grandiflora* may be used as screens to this high barrier, and below them flowering Dogwood—both *Cornus florida* and *Kousa*—to make an agreeable group, as they can be seen from the walk below and their foliage and flowers are also well in view from the top of the steps leading from the Rose Garden to the Fountain Terrace. The choice of *Cornus* has been made here for two reasons: both because of its spring flower, and because of its autumn color and fruit. And in winter, the gray twigs with their little shielded flower buds are pleasant against the evergreens.

On either side of the walk leading toward the Apple tree, queer old Box bushes—rather grotesque and out of shape—are purposely set irregularly on either side of the walk. This little area has been known as "Cocky-Locky's Garden," as the fantastic shapes of the Box scraps look like overgrown topiary figures and give an accent of the unexpected. It is possible that a Crabapple might be concealed among the Dogwoods, but the main body of the planting south-east of the Rose Garden Terrace should be Dogwoods feathered down with the two Jasmynes, the winter-flowering *nudiflorum* and the summer-flowering *florida*.

The ground cover between the walk and the fantastic shapes of "Cocky-Locky" and his family—consisting of Snakeberry, *Fragaria chiloensis*, *Ampelopsis*, *Vinca minor*, and wild Violets—covers the space between the Fountain Terrace gate and the Apple tree.

As the path turns westward up the hill and passes the south gate of the Rose Garden, *Cydonia sinensis*, *Pyracantha*, *Osmanthus Aquifolium*, and *Taxus* again hug the Rose Garden wall, with one *Magnolia grandiflora* backing them up. The ground carpet is much the same as near "Cocky-Locky." Ivy, Honeysuckle, and Lily-of-the-valley edge the walk.

On the south side of the walk where the former Gothic Garden is now a tangle of Jasmine, there is a plantation of *Pachysandra* under the shrubs at the walk's curve. These shrubs are two *Spiraea*—*Vanhouttei* and *Thunbergii*—and *Deutzia*. There are also Jasmynes, Box, Lilac, and *Forsythia*, with a few *Philadelphus* for the early-season scent. As the walk winds up the hill, a triangle surrounds two Persimmon trees which were among the original trees on the place.

PLANT LIST: PATH EDGING FROM THE SOUTH GATE OF THE FOUNTAIN TERRACE TO THE ORANGERY

Trees, shrubs, and vines

Cedrus deodara, Deodar cedar
Cedrus libanotica [*Cedrus libani*], Cedar-of-Lebanon
Tsuga canadensis, Canadian hemlock
Ilex aquifolium, English holly
Magnolia grandiflora, Southern magnolia
Acer palmatum, Japanese maple
Cercidiphyllum japonicum, Katsura tree
Cornus florida, Flowering dogwood
Diospyros virginiana, Common persimmon
Fagus sylvatica 'Purpurea', European purple-leaved beech
Magnolia conspicua denudata [*Magnolia hepatapepa*], Yulan magnolia
Malus sp., Apple
Morus rubra, American mulberry
Quercus alba, White oak
Sophora japonica, Japanese pagoda tree
Tilia cordata, Small-leaved European linden
Ulmus americana, American elm
Taxus baccata, English yew
Buxus sempervirens, Common box
Buxus sempervirens 'Suffruticosa', Edging box
Ligustrum japonicum, Wax-leaf privet
Osmanthus aquifolium [*Osmanthus heterophyllum*], Chinese holly
Cydonia japonica [*Chaenomeles japonica*], Japanese quince
Cydonia sinensis, Chinese quince
Deutzia sp., Deutzia
Elaeagnus angustifolia, Russian olive
Forsythia intermedia, Border forsythia
Forsythia suspensa, Weeping forsythia
Hibiscus syriacus, Rose-of-Sharon
Jasminum floridum, Flowering jasmine
Jasminum nudiflorum, Winter jasmine

Ligustrum regelianum [*Ligustrum obtusifolium regelianum*], Regel's privet
Philadelphus coronarius, Mock orange
Pyracantha coccinea, Fire thorn
Rosa multiflora, Baby rose
Spiraea anthony watereri, Anthony Waterer spirea
Spiraea douglasii, Douglas spirea
Spiraea prunifolia, Bridal-wreath
Spiraea thunbergii, Thunberg spirea
Spiraea vanhouttei, Van Houtte spirea
Syringa vulgaris, Common lilac
Viburnum lentago, Sweet viburnum
Gelsemium carolinianum [*Gelsemium sempervirens*], Carolina yellow jasmine
Paeonia sp., Peony
Paeonia albiflora [*Paeonia lactiflora*], Chinese peony
Paeonia moutan [*Paeonia suffruticosa*], Tree peony

Spring bulbs and ground covers

Galanthus sp., Snowdrops
Iris sp., Flag
Narcissus sp., Daffodil
Scilla sp., Squill
Sternbergia sp., Sternbergia
Actaea rubra, Snakeberry
Ampelopsis sp., Ampelopsis
Convallaria majalis, Lily-of-the-valley
Fragaria chiloensis, Beach strawberry
Hedera sp., Ivy
Jasminum nudiflorum, Winter jasmine
Lonicera sp., Honeysuckle
Pachysandra sp., Pachysandra
Vinca minor, Periwinkle
Viola sp., Wild violet

It is almost impossible to particularize the details of the planting on this whole walk, as the deciduous trees, such as *Cercidiphyllum* and *Sophora* and American Elm, are all a part of the plantation, the reason for which is the building of a barrier between the east lawn and the walk surrounding it. When the walk was first spoken of, it was called the "Wilderness Walk," as it was like many a path in old southern places where a wilderness was an essential part of the seventeenth or eighteenth-century design.

The edging to this walk on the south and east sides should be of small Box border. When it outgrows its convenient size it should be replaced by smaller material of the same sort.

Beatrix Farrand's Plant Book for Dumbarton Oaks / THEMES

PLANTS

species

form

scale

color

seasonality

texture

replacement

in-kind

substitution

pre-existing conditions

grading/topography

design changes

materiality

spatial sequence

Beatrix Farrand's Plant Book for Dumbarton Oaks / HISTORY

Beatrix Farrand's *Plant Book* was written in 1941, in a period of critical importance to the preservation of western culture, so many elements of which are represented at Dumbarton Oaks.

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Beatrix Farrand's *Plant Book* is the cornerstone on which the plan for the preservation of the gardens at Dumbarton Oaks is based. Presentation of garden art must be founded on accurate historical documentation, but specific, detailed planting information often is lacking completely or survives in the most fragmentary form. John S. Thacher, appointed in 1940 the first Director of Dumbarton Oaks, was given the responsibility of overseeing its garden as well as administering its scholarly affairs. It was most important at that time to provide a smooth transition as the estate was turned over to Harvard University by its owners. Realizing that inevitably changes in the gardens would need to be made, that certain functions would be altered or eliminated, and that maintenance standards would be lowered in the future, he requested that Beatrix Farrand, who had been commissioned by Mildred Bliss in 1922 to design the gardens, write a plant book that would become a guide for their future upkeep and development. This was a request which demonstrated remarkable vision on the part of John Thacher, and it resulted in this unique document that describes measures to be taken when plants need replacement, the various levels of maintenance required, the design concept of each part of the gardens, why particular choices were made, and why certain ideas were rejected. In addition, forty-two plant lists are included which give the scientific names of the plants growing in the gardens in 1941. It is clear that the meticulous documentation in her *Plant Book* was an arduous and time-consuming task for Beatrix Farrand who, at almost seventy, had been working on the gardens for twenty years. The very nature of the gardens, their organizational complexity, and her own conscientious nature which caused her to suffer anxiety over delay or inaccuracy, made the compilation of the book a labor of love requiring immense perseverance. But thanks to her dedication, and the foresight of John Thacher in engaging her for this task, we have a document of great value, not only to Dumbarton Oaks but to the historical record of the development of landscape architecture in twentieth-century America.

Diane Kostial McGuire, *Foreward* to Beatrix Farrand's Plant Book for Dumbarton Oaks

Beatrix Farrand's Plant Book for Dumbarton Oaks / HISTORY

Another job on which Miss Sweeney will be needed, and this time by me, is the preparation of a planting record book such as we have started for the different universities and which are the permanent record of the different planting schemes. For instance at Dumbarton Oaks the plantings grouped along R Street are to be described and why the fine-leaved evergreens have been chosen (as a contrast to the coarser magnolias nearby, and in order to give scale) also the planting around the house, the general groups in the gardens, the planting on the north side of the house, and the different groups of creepers and their approximate positions. **This book is going to be of use for the future. While it will mean no imposed and unchangeable planting scheme it will at least show Harvard what had been thought out and found to work by the original owners.**

(Beatrix Farrand letter to Mildred Bliss, June 17 1941, pg 3)

emphasis added

Beatrix Farrand's Plant Book for Dumbarton Oaks / HISTORY

The statement must of course be very brief, in fact I find in looking back through our files that the whole planting scheme for the University at Princeton which has held for over twenty-five years, is not longer than a page and a half.

(Beatrix Farrand letter to Mildred Bliss, June 28 1941, pg 1)

Beatrix Farrand's Plant Book for Dumbarton Oaks / HISTORY

You may like to know that work on the Dumbarton Oaks report is again started and it seems likely that **the report as a whole will be useful more to show the “temperament” of the place than the actual position of each tree and shrub.** When Bryce said that he wanted the book so that he could abide by it, it made my blood run cold as nothing will so quickly kill the spirit of any place than to have planting slavishly repeated in certain places because it was originally put there.

(Beatrix Farrand letter to John Thacher, January 1 1946)

emphasis added

Beatrix Farrand's Plant Book for Dumbarton Oaks / HISTORY

As to finishing them – it will first be necessary to have someone go carefully over the manuscript and see where the gaps are. These places should be marked, as it seems to me that some of the areas were fairly fully covered when the notes were made, perhaps ten or more years ago. The person to continue the notes must know them and study them fairly carefully. ... Perhaps at the foot of each section a paragraph might follow, telling of the changes made by time or alteration since the draft was started.

(Beatrix Farrand letter to Mildred Bliss, January 21 1953)

Beatrix Farrand's Plant Book for Dumbarton Oaks / HISTORY



Beatrix Farrand's Plant Book for Dumbarton Oaks / HISTORY

This, it seems to me, is of such importance in its detail, not only to the future of Dumbarton Oaks but also in its principles for all landscape gardeners, that I shall recommend that an issue be made of it for distribution amongst landscape garden schools, universities, etc. It is a great report and a model steering gear for your actual and future colleagues. It would be difficult to tell you how grateful I am for it and how much I appreciate the labour it has involved for you.

(Mildred Bliss letter to Beatrix Farrand, August 19, 1944)

Beatrix Farrand's Plant Book for Dumbarton Oaks / VISUALIZATION

'temperament' rather than specificity

change over time (pre-existing conditions to present)

spatial sequence

PLANTS

form

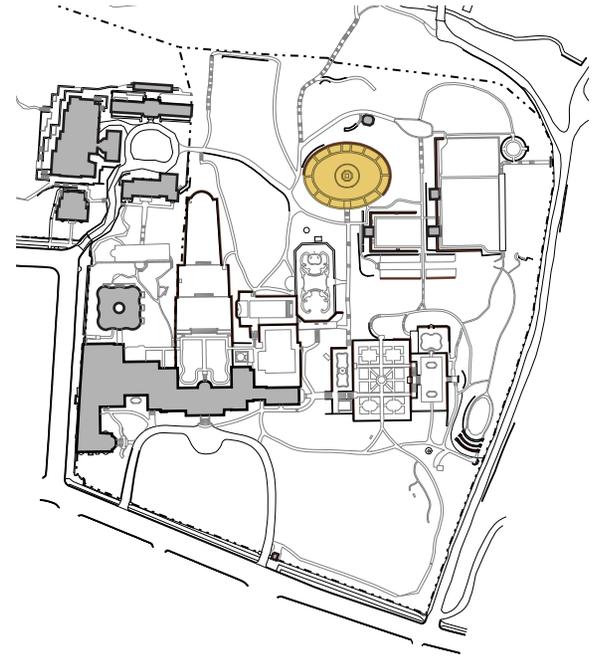
scale

color

seasonality

texture

Box Ellipse

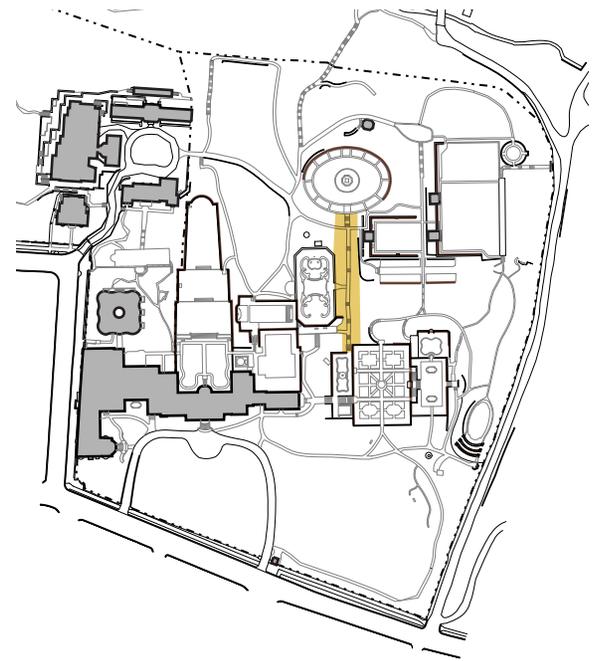




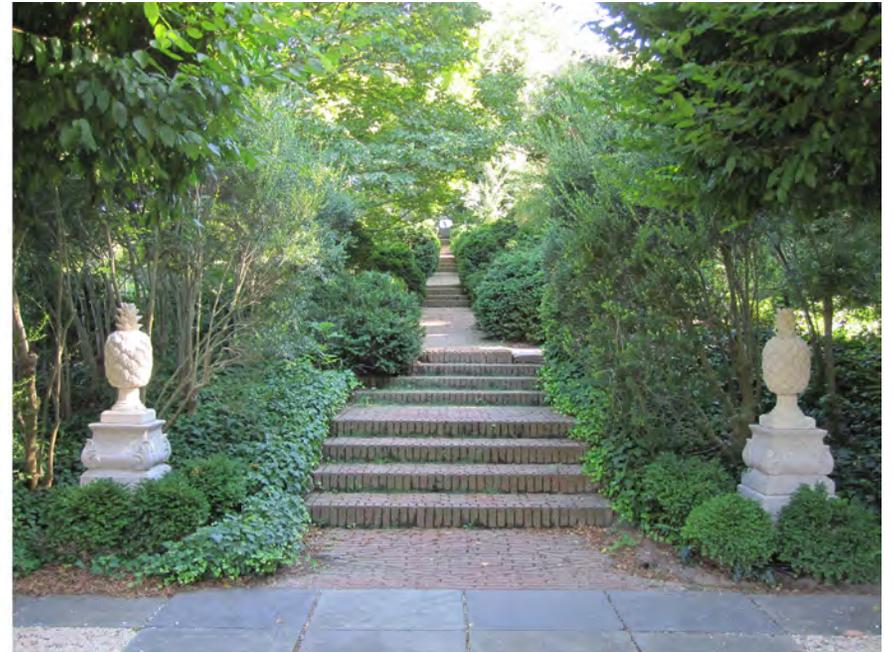




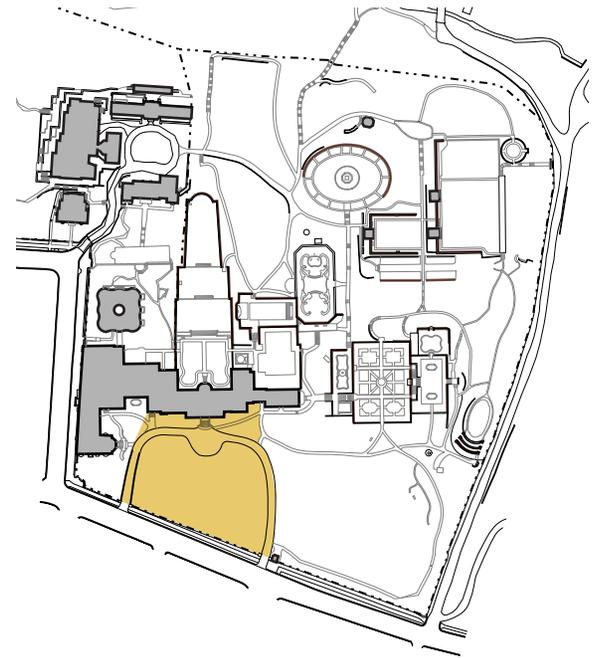
Box Walk







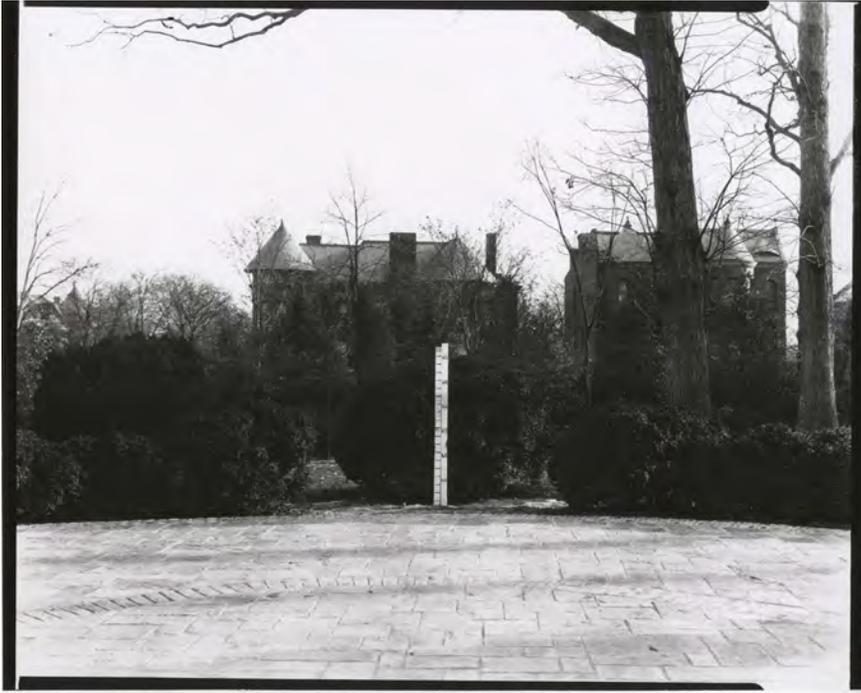
South Lawn













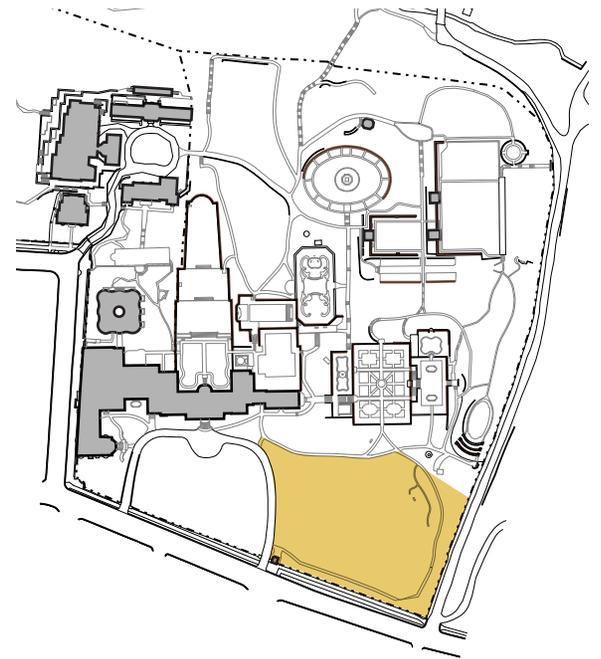
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East Lawn

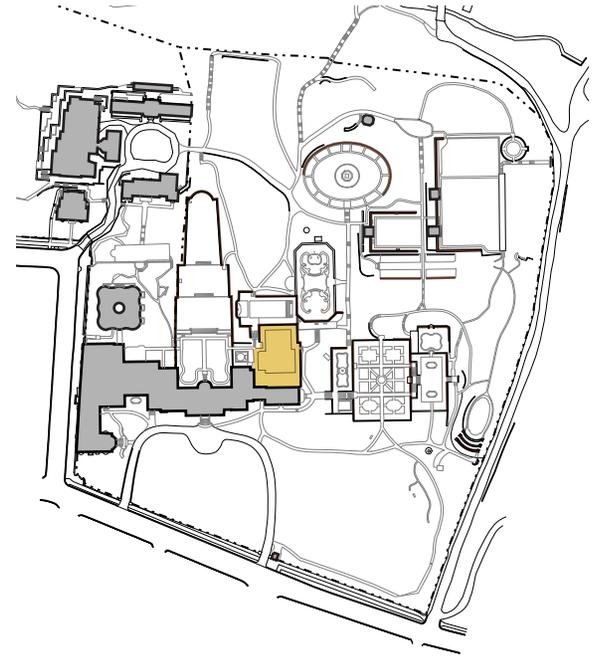








Green Garden





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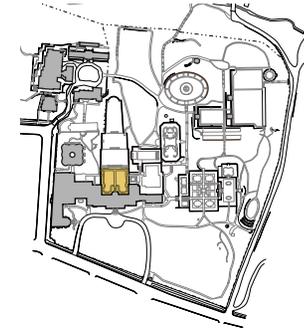
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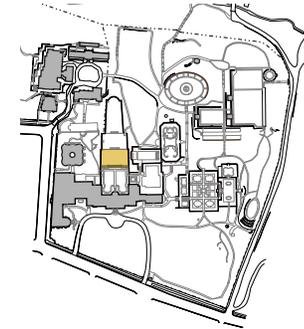




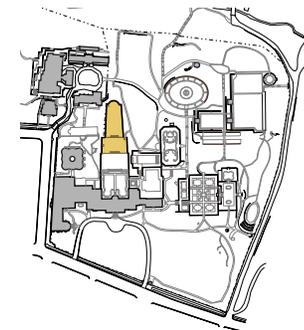
North Court



Cedar Terrace



North Vista

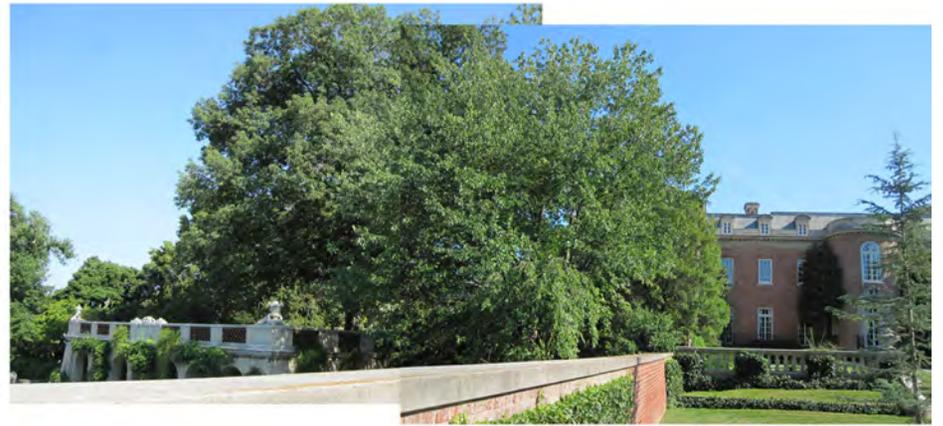




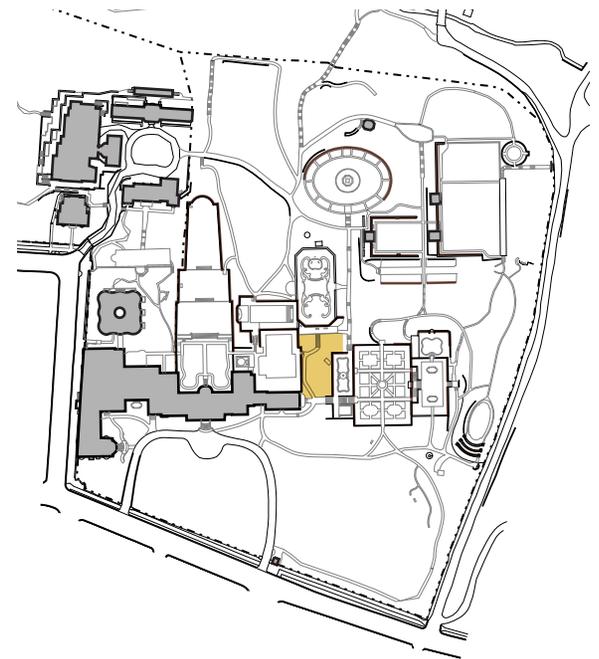




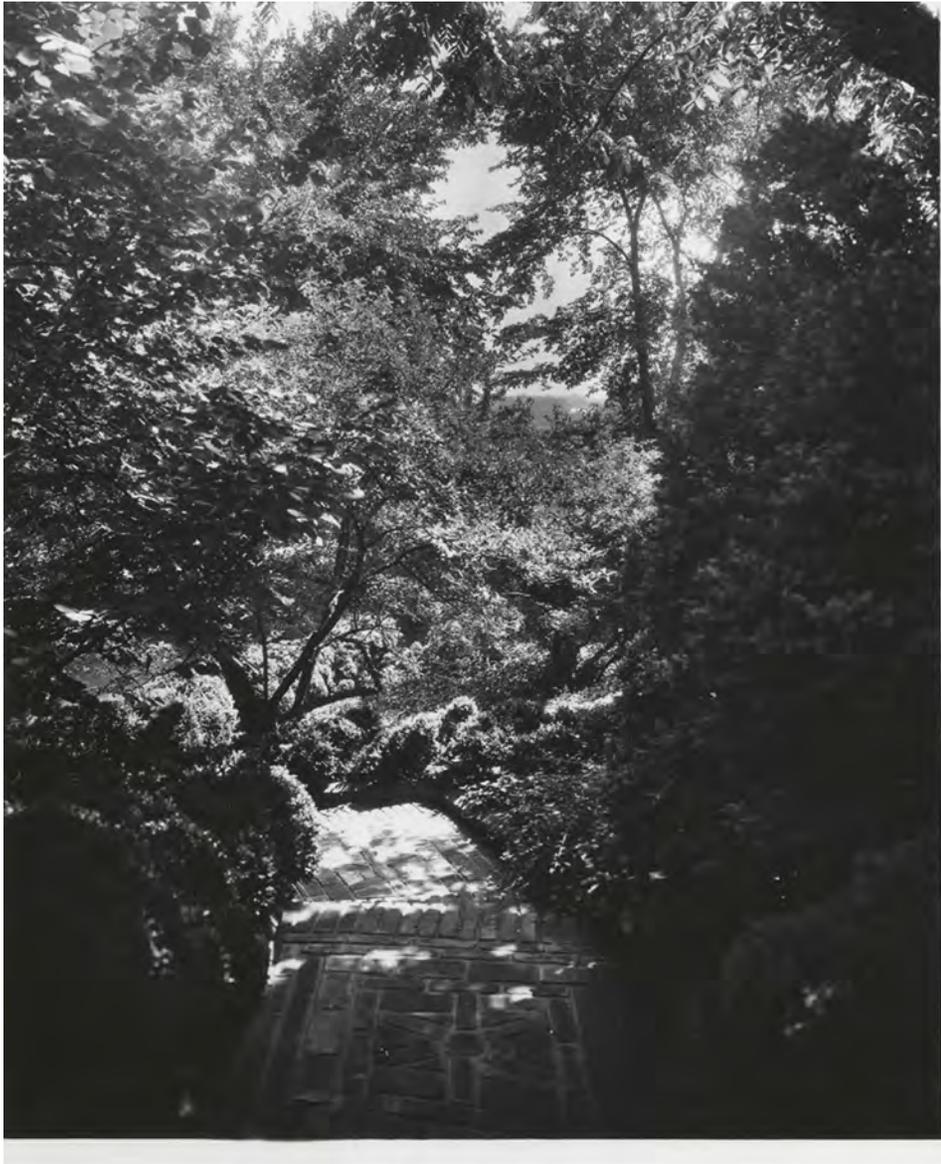




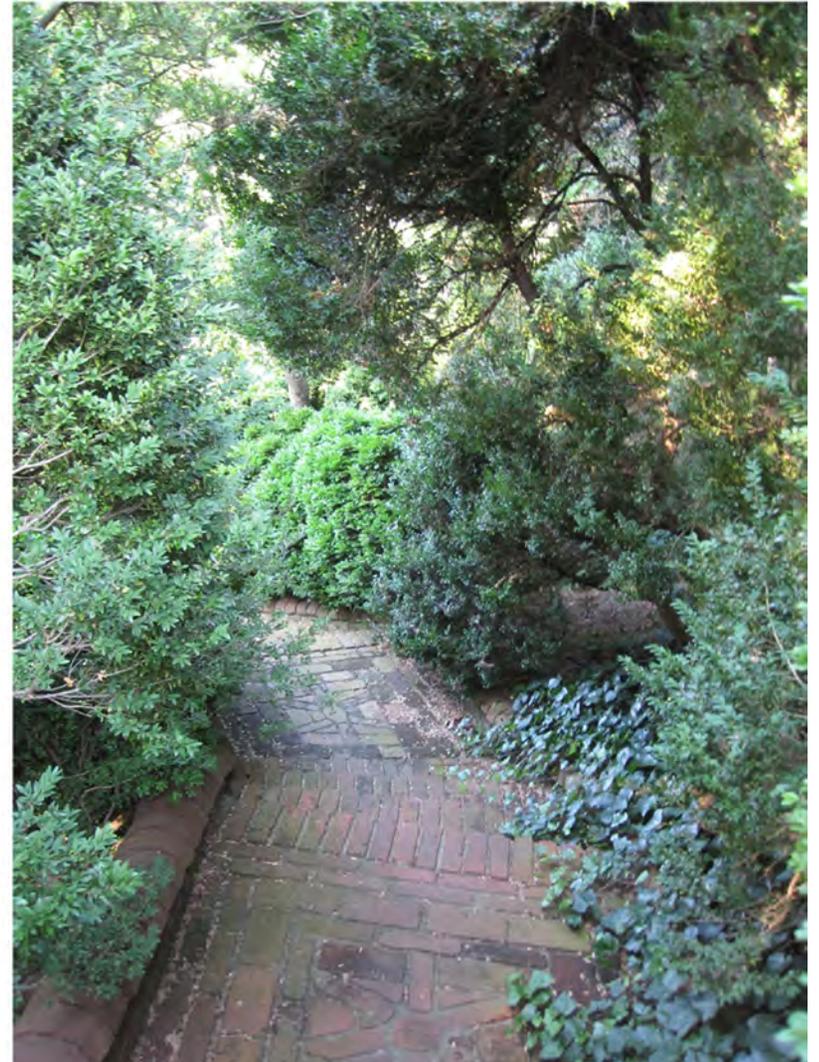
Beech Terrace







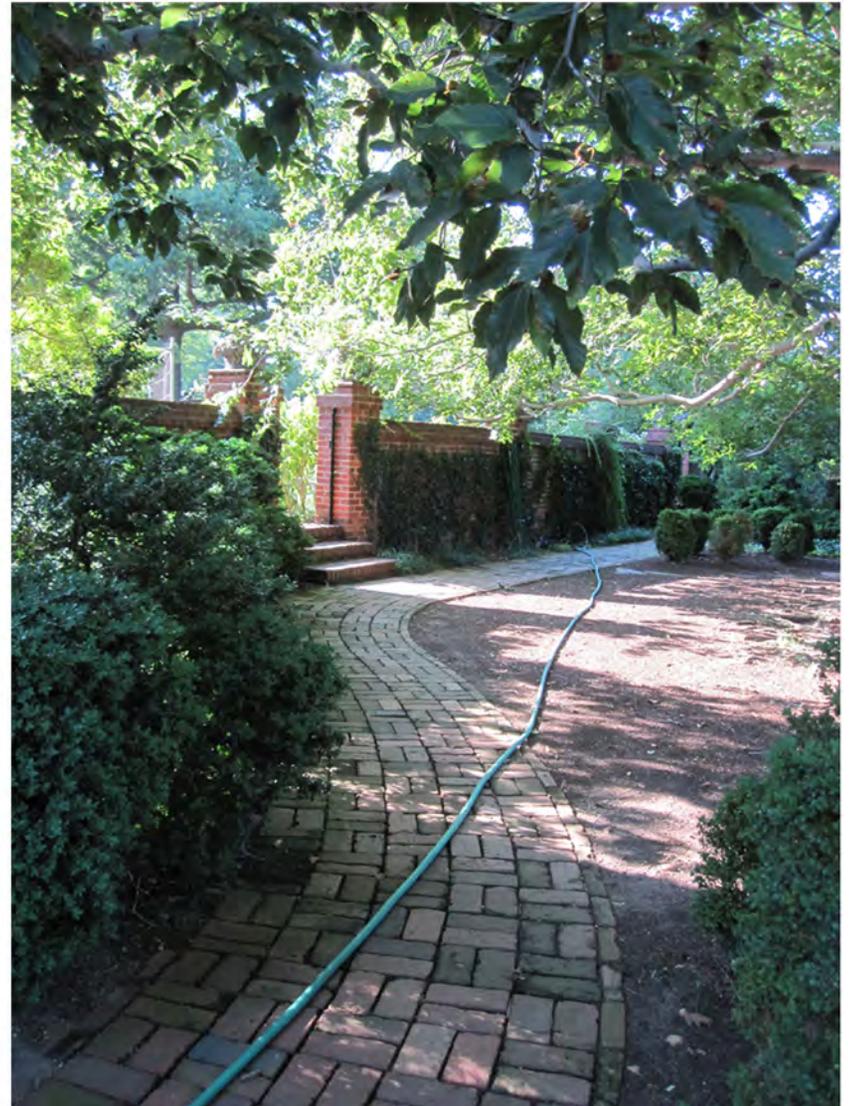
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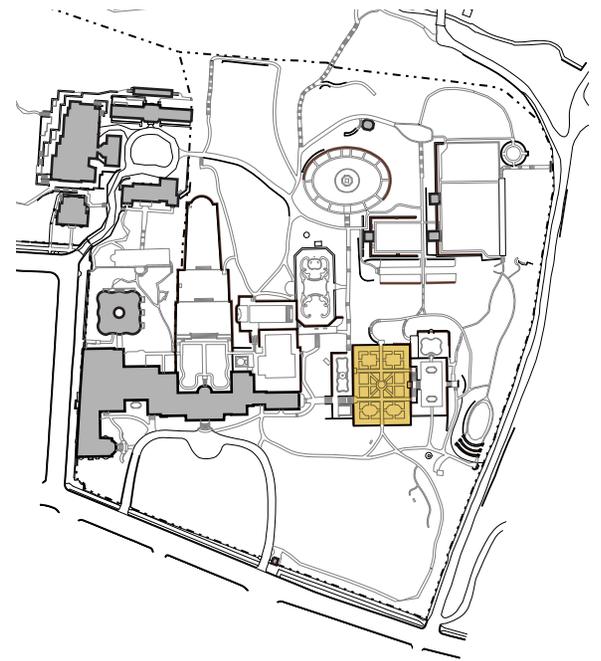
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Rose Garden





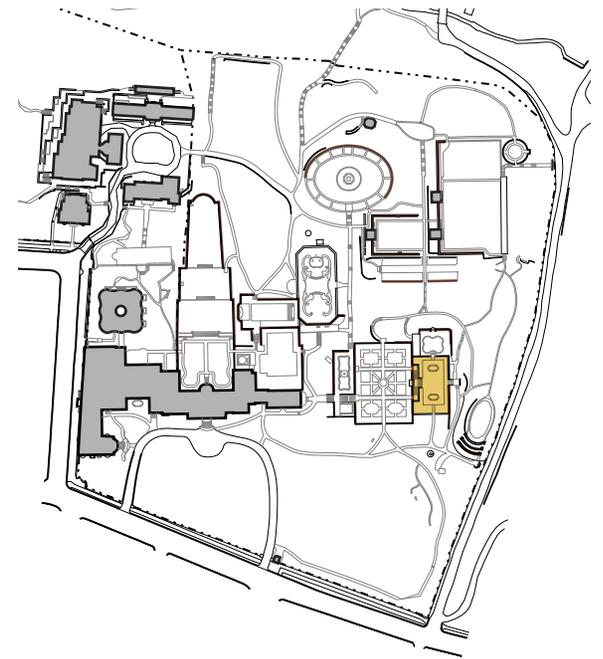




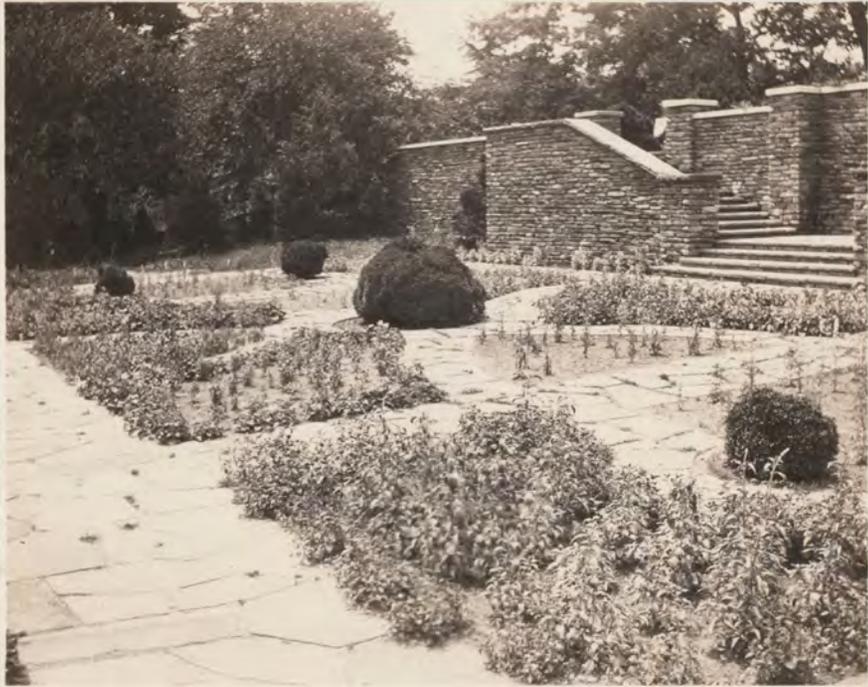




Fountain Terrace







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Herb Garden and Wisteria Arbor







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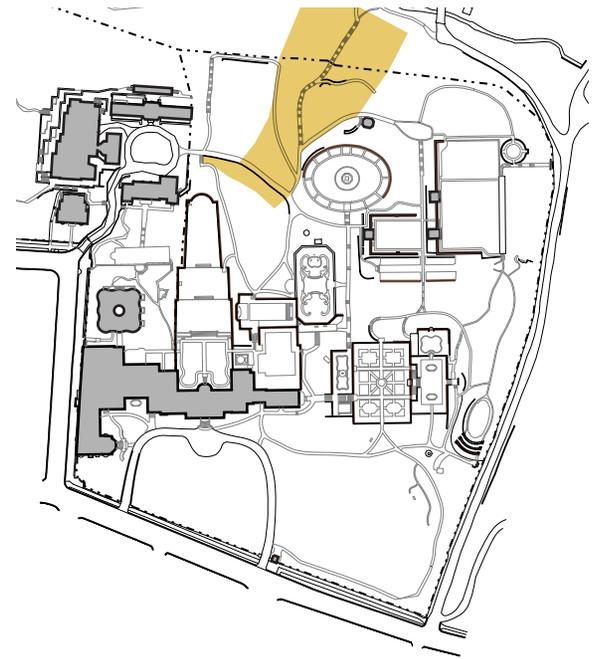
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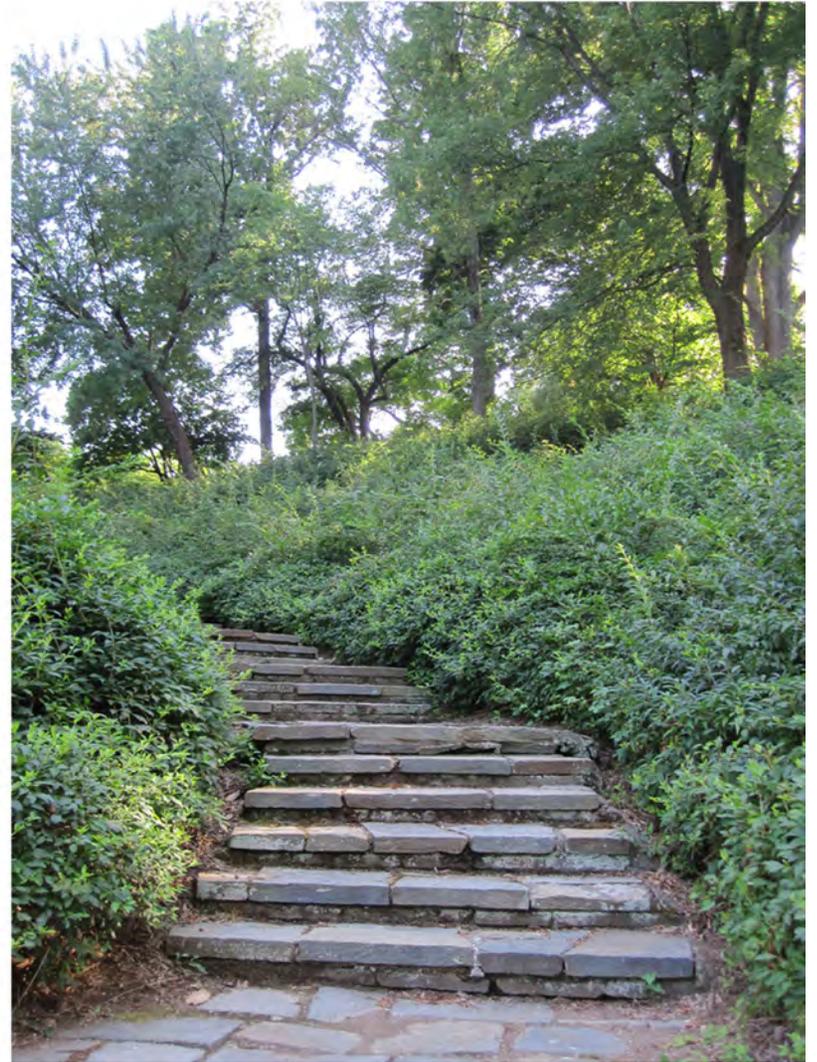
Forsythia Dell





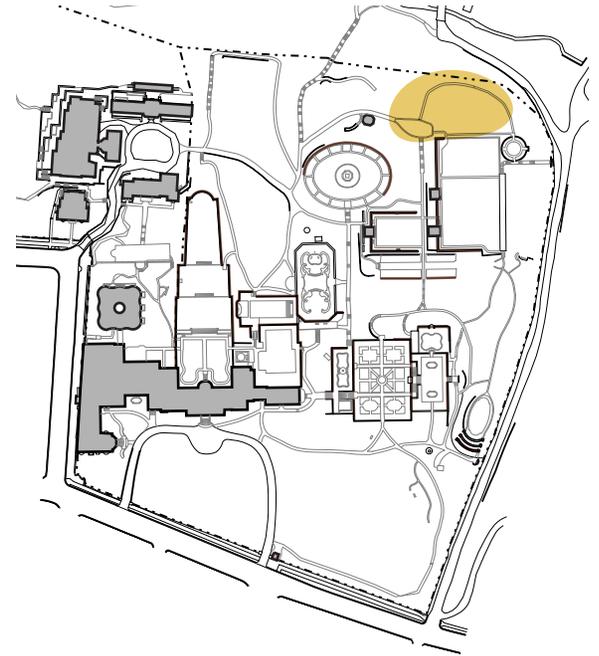


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Cherry Hill







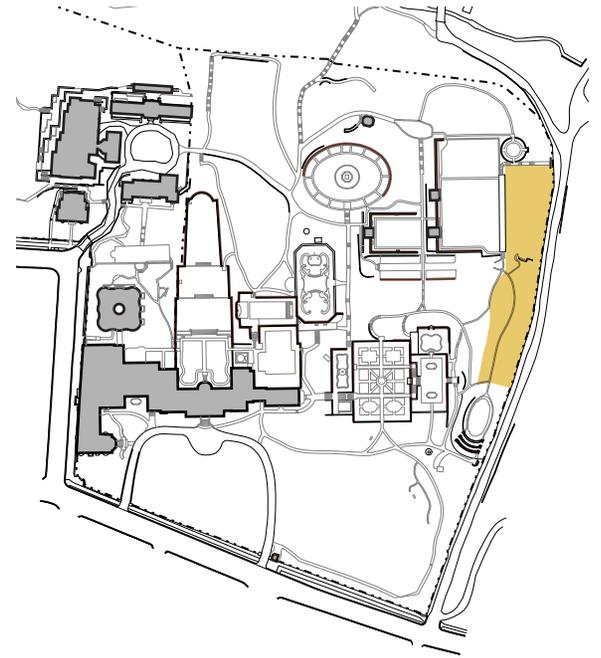
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Melisande's Allee





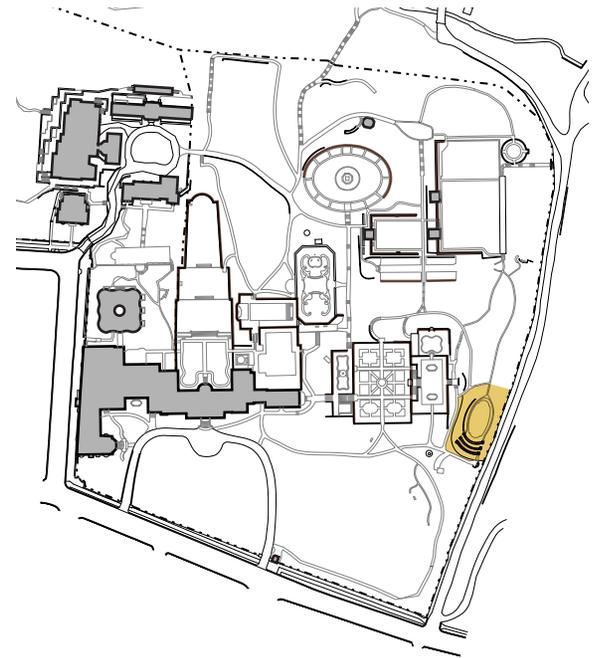




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Lover's Lane Pool









Visualizing Beatrix Farrand's Plant Book for Dumbarton Oaks



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