During her lifetime, Emily Dickinson (1830–1886) was better known as a gardener than as a poet. Plants and flowers significantly influenced her poetry and other writings, most of which were not published until after her death. The New York Botanical Garden’s multi-venue exhibition, *Emily Dickinson’s Garden: The Poetry of Flowers*, co-presented with the Poetry Society of America, will illuminate Dickinson’s life and work, the connections that exist between her life and poems, and her study and love of flowers and gardens. Dickinson’s poems have become an integral part of the American literary canon, yet the fundamental impact that plants and flowers had on her poetry is little known by the public. From April 30 through June 13, the Botanical Garden’s exhibition will reveal this new perspective on one of the greatest Romantic poets of the Victorian era, immersing visitors in the garden, life, and poems of Emily Dickinson in contemporary, fresh ways.

**Emily Dickinson’s Garden Re-created in the Conservatory**

A flower show in the Enid A. Haupt Conservatory will feature a re-creation of Dickinson’s own mid-19th-century New England flower garden, an interpretation curators have been able to craft from extensive research and careful reading of her poems and notes. On display will be Dickinson’s favorite plants and flowers, including daisies, daylilies, tulips, roses, lilies, jasmine, and many others, giving witness to how she may have felt in the surroundings that inspired so much of her poetry. Visitors will stroll through a replica of the family property in Amherst, Massachusetts, including the Homestead, Emily’s own home, as well as her brother’s home, the Evergreens, and the beloved wooded pathway that joined the two.

Many of Dickinson’s poems and letters allude to wildflowers, traditional herbaceous garden plants, and the exotic plants in her own conservatory and gardens. Scholars have long speculated about her interest in plants, but this is the most comprehensive exhibition about Dickinson’s choice of specific plants and flowers in her writing. *Emily Dickinson’s Garden* will be a sumptuous presentation of the types of flora that were available near her home and their symbolism in Victorian culture.

– more –
Emily Dickinson’s Life Explored in the Library Gallery

An exhibition of more than 50 fascinating objects—books, manuscripts, watercolors, and photographs telling the story of Emily Dickinson’s life—will be featured in the Gallery of the Mertz Library. The artifacts provide a rare glimpse of Emily’s world, her reclusiveness, her adoration of flowers and plants, and her reluctance to share her poetry with outsiders. The links between her verse and the plants and flowers that were her motivation will be on display, as well as several of her original manuscripts, both poems and letters. A reproduction of her only extant dress (it is believed she wore only white) will be on loan from the Emily Dickinson Museum in Amherst. Other lenders to the exhibition are the Jones Library, also in Amherst; Harvard University; and the Rosenbach Museum & Library in Philadelphia.

Visitors will discover her not only as a poet, but also as a gardener, botanist, nature lover, and woman of the Victorian era. She came from a cultivated, educated, and genteel family. The family gardened and she herself studied botany from the age of nine, and throughout her life tended the garden at the Homestead. As an amateur botanist, she collected, pressed, classified, and labeled more than 420 flower specimens. Visitors will be able to peruse scans of the digitized version of Emily Dickinson’s Herbarium (MS Am 1118.11, by permission of the Houghton Library, Harvard University), examining specimens through an interactive, touch-screen kiosk, as if they were turning the pages of Dickinson’s scrapbook. An exhibition catalog will feature essays by Dickinson scholars Judith Farr and Marta McDowell.

Emily Dickinson’s Poems in the Setting of the Botanical Garden’s Outdoor Spring Landscape

Emily Dickinson’s Poetry Walk, with over 30 poetry boards and audio messages featuring Dickinson’s poems and the plants and flowers that inspired her to write them, will take visitors through some of the Botanical Garden’s collections at the peak of the spring flowering season. Visitors strolling along the poetry walk will read her poems, while surrounded by plants that served as her muse, daffodils, roses, daisies, tulips, crabapples, and hemlocks.

The New York Botanical Garden will present readings of Dickinson’s poetry through The Big Read, an initiative of the National Endowment for the Arts designed to restore reading to the center of American culture.

Emily Dickinson’s Garden: The Poetry of Flowers is co-presented with the Poetry Society of America. A primary collaborator for the exhibition is the Emily Dickinson Museum.

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Additional Support
The Kurt Berliner Foundation
New York Council for the Humanities

Exhibitions in the Enid A. Haupt Conservatory are made possible by the Estate of Enid A. Haupt.
Exhibitions in the Mertz Library are made possible by the LuEsther T. Mertz Charitable Trust.
Audio Tour is sponsored by Bloomberg

The New York Botanical Garden is located on property owned in full by the City of New York, and its operation is made possible in part by public funds provided through the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs. A portion of the Garden’s general operating funds is provided by The New York City Council and The New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation. The Bronx Borough President and Bronx elected representatives in the City Council and State Legislature provide leadership funding.

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