



THE NEW YORK BOTANICAL GARDEN

For Immediate Release
March 29, 2010

Emily Dickinson's Garden: The Poetry of Flowers
Spring Exhibition at The New York Botanical Garden
April 30–June 13, 2010

Discover the Renowned Poet's Life Among Gardens and Spring Flowers

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.

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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.

Major Sponsor

The National Endowment for the Humanities:
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Additional Support

The Kurt Berliner Foundation

New York Council for the Humanities

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Any views, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this exhibition do not necessarily represent those of
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Audio Tour is sponsored by Bloomberg

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Exhibitions in the Mertz Library are made possible by the LuEsther T. Mertz Charitable Trust.

Spring Season sponsored by **MetLife Foundation**

The New York Botanical Garden is a museum of plants located at Bronx River Parkway (Exit 7W) and Fordham Road. It is easy to reach by Metro-North Railroad or subway. The Botanical Garden is open year-round, Tuesday through Sunday and Monday federal holidays. The best way to enjoy the Garden is with the *All-Garden Pass*, which includes admission to the grounds as well as to seasonal gardens, exhibitions, and attractions such as the Enid A. Haupt Conservatory, Everett Children's Adventure Garden, Rock Garden, and Tram Tour: \$20 for adults, \$18 for seniors and students with ID, \$8 for children ages 2–12, children under 2 are free. A *Grounds-Only Pass* is available: \$6 for adults, \$5 for adult Bronx Residents; \$3 for seniors, \$2 for students with ID, \$1 for children ages 2–12, children under 2 are free. Grounds-only admission is free all day on Wednesdays and from 10 a.m. to noon on Saturdays. Discounts available for groups of 15 or more. Contact Group Tours, 718.817.8687. For more information, please call 718.817.8700 or visit nybg.org Read the Botanical Garden's popular blog, *Plant Talk: Inside The New York Botanical Garden* at nybg.org/wordpress

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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