ANNUAL EVENTS

Throughout the year, Colonial Williamsburg offers seasonal vacation packages and special events. For information, visit www.ColonialWilliamsburg.com or call 1-800-HISTORY (1-800-447-8679).

SPRING is an exceptional time to explore gardens in Virginia. The annual COLONIAL WILLIAMSBURG GARDEN SYMPOSIUM (late April/early May) offers a perfect opportunity for interested gardeners to explore a topic in depth. Schedules and other information are available at www.history.org/conted.

Consider visiting during HISTORIC GARDEN WEEK in Virginia (late April). The local Garden Club showcases a variety of Williamsburg gardens and area plantations—some generally not open to the public—offer special programs. For an overview of the statewide offerings visit www.vagardenweek.org.

Step into our garden . . . and take delight in WILLIAMSBURG® products that can enhance your home, garden space, and spots of serenity. For bird baths, fountains, garden ornaments, permanent botanicals, and more, shop www.williamsburgmarketplace.com.

Colonial Williamsburg
WILLIAMSBURG, VIRGINIA
1-800-HISTORY (1-800-447-8679)
www.history.org

The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation is the not-for-profit educational institution that preserves and interprets the restored 18th-century capital of Virginia. Williamsburg is located 150 miles south of Washington, D.C., off Interstate 64.
From mid-March through the Christmas season, guests can explore the Colonial Garden Programs and Tours. Guests may purchase authentic plants and seeds and other garden-related items offered by Colonial Williamsburg’s Products Division. Meet the Gardener. How does someone maintain and preserve a historic garden? Talk to a landscape volunteer and find out what goes on in the George Reid Garden. It’s a perfect opportunity to get answers to your gardening questions.

The Gardens of the Historic Area, an interpretive and educational feature of the Historic Area from the Revolution on, are open to the public from dawn to dusk. The gardens are maintained to show how Williamsburg was perceived and how its people lived. The gardens reflect the time periods of the 17th to 18th centuries and reflect the social and economic status of the people who lived in these periods. The gardens are designed to show how Williamsburg’s gardens developed from the gardens of the early 18th century to the formal style of the 1740s to the more informal style of the 1750s.

Colonial Williamsburg Garden Programs and Tours

Garden History Walk explains how Colonial Williamsburg landscape architects and gardeners re-create the gardens in the Historic Area using archaeological and historical documentation. Discover the evolution of the design and interpretation of our gardens and learn what influences the development and design of the landscape and gardens. Find out how we identify and use native and imported plants.

Gardens of Gentility explores how gardens reflected the lifestyles and ideals of people living in 18th-century Williamsburg. What influenced Williamsburg’s gardens prior to 1750? How did gardens signify wealth and status? How did horticulture develop between 1750 and 1820?

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Garden Tours are available April–September to Colonial Williamsburg ticketed guests. Check the weekly program guide for times. Reservations are required.

Consequently, a stroll through the Historic Area will take you through many utilitarian gardens. Fruits, vegetables, and herbs grown in the town’s kitchen gardens provided a bounty of edible items. Native and “exotic” plants grown by the colonists have been identified, collected, and planted in Williamsburg’s gardens. Ongoing research continues to provide more information about 18th-century Williamsburg’s gardens, allowing Colonial Williamsburg landscape staff to find more period plants, particularly vegetables and flowers, and place them in the appropriate gardens.

Historical authenticity sometimes involves studying modern interpretations. When the restoration of Williamsburg began in the mid-1920s, the Colonial Revival movement had popularized highly formal gardens similar to those at the Governor’s Palace. While living at Bassett Hall, the Rockefeller’s Williamsburg residence, Abby Aldrich Rockefeller constructed a beautiful formal garden. Part of the Foundation’s comprehensive renovation and restoration of Bassett Hall, completed in December 2002, included the re-creation of Mrs. Rockefeller’s 1940s Colonial Revival gardens.

The gloriously restored Anglo-Dutch gardens of the Governor’s Palace owe their accuracy to extensive research. Using broad outlines uncovered by archaeological excavations during the 1930s and filling in details shown in an 18th-century copper-plate engraving, Colonial Williamsburg’s landscape architects and gardeners have re-created spaces clearly meant to emphasize the power of colonial government. During the 18th century, such formal, ornamental gardens were signs of wealth and a level of leisure greater than most of Williamsburg’s residents. Today, the gardens reflect Colonial Williamsburg’s ongoing research to produce historically accurate gardens that reflect the variety of 18th-century lifestyles and present a more historically accurate landscape.
Dr. Barraud House—The reconstructed garden incorporates three small, formal spaces, and a natural, or wild, garden. Archaeological investigations in the rear revealed patterns of several outbuildings, elaborate from drains, brick pavements, and walkways. In fact, the walkways in the garden were some of the best preserved in Williamsburg, giving a clear indication of the garden's original layout.

Elizabeth Carlos House—The pleasure garden is a typical four-square pattern employing a wellhouse as focal point. The wellhead is not precisely in the center of the space, but offers to allow the several paths to pass in front of the well. A carefully trimmed hedge of yarrow holly surrounds the otherwise symmetrical garden.

Coke-Garrett House—The Coke-Garrett House was described in the 18th century as a "long frame house" with "beautiful gardens surrounding the estate." Today, stately evergreens, nut trees, and old boxwood enclose the area behind the house and lead down a gravel ramp to a flower border on the lower garden level.

The Colonial Garden and Nursery—The garden displays many rare and unusual varieties of herbloom vegetables as well as a collection of herbloom roses and fruits. It features a botanic garden of North American and European herbs; an herb garden with examples of culinary, medicinal, and household herbs used by the colonists.

Alexander Craig House—Gardens and outbuildings were mentioned in the recorded deeds for this original house. Today the pleasure garden with seasonal color provides an attractive foreground to the orchard's fruit trees, pleached beeches, and the original brick path.

Bracken Tenement—The street fence reflects the break indicated on the Frenchman's Map, an 18th-century billboarding map of Williamsburg. The garden design has been kept simple with a small parterre immediately to the rear of the house. Yarrow has been used in three different ways here— as enclosing hedge, as topiary accents, and in free-growing screen.

Bryan House—An arbor covered with trumpet honeysuckle and American wisteria offers a splendid view of the carefully trimmed boxwood parterre. This Colonial Revival garden was based on garden patterns described in Claude Joseph Sauthier's maps of North Carolina towns of about 1769. Southampton, a French landscape gardener who came to North Carolina in 1767, surveyed and drew plans for several of that colony's towns.

Christiania Campbell's Tavern—Arthur A. Shurcliff's successor, Alden Hopkins, designed a beautiful Colonial Revival garden beside the tavern. Its geometric patterns features nine planting beds with a tiered topiary yucca holly in the central circle. Flowering dogwoods, oak, leaf hydrangeas, and red cedars create seasonal interest. Over 10 acres, resembles English country estates during the reign of King William III and Queen Mary II. Three original features from the 18th century remain: the ice house, the falling gardens (terraces), and canal.

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Governor's Palace—The complex of gardens, spread over several acres, resembles English country estates during the reign of King William III and Queen Mary II. Three original features from the 18th century remain: the ice house, falling gardens (terraces), and canal.

Alexander Purdie—The Purdie work yard is dominated by a variety of outbuildings, or dependencies. The pleasure garden features a simple four-square design with 16 identically sheared yucca topiaries within four turf panels defined by brick crosswalls. Plants of seasonal interest include shadbush flowers, pomegranates, and oak-leaf hydrangeas.

George Reid House—The Reid House is unique in being set back from the front property line by eight feet. The lot has four sections: a service yard directly behind the house; a kitchen garden featuring vegetables, trees, and herbs; an orchard; and a paddock with a stable fronting on Francis Street.

Taliaferro-Cole House—Thomas Crease, a gardener in 18th-century Williamsburg, lived on this site for a total of 35 years. The topography of the site is largely unchanged from his time. The garden consists of three separate rectangular areas enclosed by fencing, each planted for a different purpose.

Wetherburn's Tavern—Behind the kitchen and adjacent outbuildings is a simple space kitchen garden with a central path. The contents of a well on the site, examined during archaeological investigations, were found to include stones, seeds, and remains of several common fruits and vegetables.

George Wythe House—Surviving letters reveal that Wythe was interested in fruit culture, but his wife apparently was in charge of the kitchen garden. Today a kitchen garden, orchard, and the service yard with dependencies that have been reconstructed. The pleasure garden is balanced by the stable and paddock at the rear of the site.

"No occupation is so delightful to me as the culture of the earth, and no culture comparable to that of the garden." —THOMAS JEFFERSON

See map on previous page for locations of these gardens.