

RAP GARDENS IN FOCUS

Explore Sites That Participate in the AHS Reciprocal Admissions Program

Allen Centennial Garden at the University of Wisconsin–Madison

by Laken Burns



Top: A pond filled with aquatic plants is one of the gardens built around the old Agricultural Dean's Residence, background. **Above:** Benches under vine-covered arbors provide a shaded respite.

SITUATED ON two-and-a-half acres around the historic Agricultural Dean's Residence at the University of Wisconsin–Madison (UW), Allen Centennial Garden serves as an outdoor classroom for both students and the larger community. The garden's name honors Ethel and Oscar Allen; she a botany and bacteriology UW alumna and former faculty member, and he a professor at UW for nearly 30 years. Funding from them made the garden possible, and its dedication in 1989 coincided with the 100th anniversary of the university's Horticulture Department, hence the name Allen Centennial.

CREATIVE COLLECTIONS

Allen Centennial Garden (ACG) comprises several distinctive garden spaces with

Additional Information

Allen Centennial Garden

620 Babcock Drive, Madison, WI 53706
(608) 576-2501
www.allencentennialgarden.org

- Hours: Dawn to dusk, year-round.
- Admission: Free.
- RAP benefits: AHS members receive free or discounted registration for programs, events, and tours.

three main themes: plant ingenuity, design history, and native plant collections. Among these is the recently redesigned **New American Garden**, influenced by the New Perennial Movement, which takes a naturalistic and ecological approach to plant selection and placement. From this contemporary end of the spectrum, visitors also can experience more traditional design styles in the **Italian Garden** and the **English Border Garden**.

Plant palettes run the gamut from the **Rock Garden**, which received the 2019 Frank Cabot Public Rock Garden Award from the North American Rock Garden Society and features saxifrages, daphnes, and other alpine species, to the **Wisconsin Woodland Garden**, home to a wide variety of native, shade-loving species.

Though the garden may seem eclectic, each plant and technique has been deliberately chosen. “In addition to color, we consider a plant’s unique textures, its ecological niche including how it serves local wildlife, how adaptable a plant is to challenging weather conditions, and a plant’s four-season interest,” says Ben Futa, ACG’s executive director. “All of this informs how we choose plants and put them together.”

The garden’s staff keep all these factors in mind when selecting an overarching theme each year. In light of current global concerns, especially climate change, the 2019 theme is “Resiliency.”

“Resiliency is all about envisioning a future where our gardens become more than simply the sum of our plants, embracing their full potential to have a positive impact on our culture, community, economy, and environment,” says Futa. ACG encourages gardeners to explore this theme by participating in its new Resilient Landscapes Project, a community-based research initiative

HOW THE RECIPROCAL ADMISSIONS PROGRAM (RAP) WORKS

This American Horticultural Society program is designed to encourage people to visit gardens, arboreta, and conservatories while traveling. As a current member, you receive free admission and/or other special discounts at more than 320 sites throughout North America! Here’s how to make the most of this member benefit:

- View the current list of participating locations and the RAP benefits they offer at www.ahsgardening.org/rapgardens. This list is also published in a booklet. To order, visit <https://www.ahsgardening.org/gardening-programs/rap>.
- Contact the garden to confirm the RAP benefits it offers. (Some sites may choose to enforce a 90-mile exclusion policy; if your zip code falls within that distance from the location, you would not receive the offered RAP benefits there.) Admission to special events may also be excluded.
- Present your current membership card at the admissions counter or gift shop to receive the RAP benefit(s) offered by that garden. Each card will only admit the individual(s) listed on the card. In the case of a family, couple, or household membership card that does not list individual names, the garden must extend the benefit(s) to at least two members; it is at the garden’s discretion to extend benefits to more than two individuals. Some gardens may require a photo ID.



The award-winning rock garden features gravel paths and a wide variety of alpine species.

in collaboration with the Environmental Design Lab at UW that seeks to collect data on sustainability practices.

BRINGING PEOPLE AND PLANTS TOGETHER

Having just celebrated its 30th anniversary in June, ACG has much more planned for the rest of the year. On every Wednesday through October, it will host nature-based Lunchtime Wellness activities. On July 26, its Rainbow Party invites the public to re-

imagine color in the garden. Live entertainment will accompany demonstrations on how to breed your own daylily and create flower crowns from plants in the garden.

“The Garden is more than just a green space,” says Futa. “We strive to be a place where people and plants harmoniously unite.”

Laken Burns is an editorial intern for The American Gardener.