Maps and specialized brochures on plants growing on the campus are available at the Arboretum office, which also houses a horticultural library. The Arboretum grounds are open from dawn to dusk year-round. Admission is free.

Welcome to the Scott Arboretum

The Scott Arboretum of Swarthmore College is home to many beautiful gardens, extraordinary trees, and outstanding plant collections. This self-guided tour will introduce you to major areas of the campus, highlighting a few notable plants along the way. The entire tour takes about 2 hours.

A. The Scott Entrance Garden, in front of the Arboretum offices, features a Cedrus atlantica Glauca group (blue Atlas cedar), a Magnolia virginiana var. australis ‘Henry Hicks’ (sweetbay magnolia), and a mixed border.

B. The Cherry Border is built around the Prunus (flowering cherry) collection. Hostas, daylilies, and groundcovers offer interest throughout the growing season.

C. Legend has it that the Meetinghouse Woods is a remnant of the forest that once covered the grounds.

D. The Lilac Collection, dating to 1931, was the first collection planted after the founding of the Arboretum. The lilacs (Syringa spp.) are at their peak beauty in May.

E. The John W. Nason Garden was a gift from the class of 1948 to honor John W. Nason, the president of Swarthmore College from 1940 to 1953. It showcases a unique combination of textures, from delicate ornamental grasses to the bold foliage of the Paulownia tomentosa (princess tree) and Catalpa bignonioides ‘Aurea’ (catalpa).

F. The Hydrangea Collection blooms from June until fall. It includes a range of Hydrangea macrophylla cultivars (both lacecap and hortensia types) as well as other species that perform well in the Delaware Valley.

G. The Harry Wood Courtyard Garden, named for the college’s head gardener from 1927 to 1958, was originally designed by William H. Frederick Jr., Swarthmore ‘48. Following the construction of the Science Center, the Harry Wood Courtyard was redesigned, but still includes the Betula nigra (river birches) and arrangements of rocks from the Pocono Mountains.

H. The Glade Garden connects the more manicured college landscape with the adjacent Crum Woods. Native plantings include Cercis canadensis (redbud) and deciduous azaleas such as Rhododendron periclymenoides and R. prunifolium.

I. The Pollinator Garden is designed to attract birds, bees, and butterflies. June through August is the best time to experience the luscious blooms and fluttering and buzzing pollinators.

J. The Winter Garden is of special interest from November until the end of March. Jasminum nudiflorum (winter jasmine), Lonicera chinensis ‘Shang-hi’, and Helleborus x hybridus (lenten rose) provide stem, leaf, and flower color throughout the winter.

K. The Metasequoia Allée, a formal walkway framed by Metasequoia glyptostroboids (dawn redwood), was designed primarily for fall interest. It is underplanted with flowering shrubs and perennials.

L. The Isabelle Cosby Courtyard was built on the site of the old Parrish Annex; the old building’s footprint is evident. With a number of sitting places and eclectic groups of trees, shrubs, perennials, and bulbs, this courtyard provides a relaxing meeting space or resting spot.

M. The peak bloom time for the Rhododendron Display Garden is mid-May. John C. Wister, the Scott Arboretum’s first director, was a noted rhododendron and azalea expert.

N. The Scott Outdoor Amphitheater, dedicated in 1942, is the site of each year’s college commencement. Liriodendron tulipifera (tulip poplar) provide a canopy for this unique architectural space.

O. At the Theresa Lang Garden of Fragrance, you can sit in the picturesque Cloister Cloisters among fragrant flowers, foliage, and bark.

P. The Tree Peony Collection is one of the Arboretum’s oldest collections and contains more than 130 different varieties of Paeonia, including Saunders’ hybrids, Japanese tree peonies, Chinese tree peonies, French hybrids, and Daphnis hybrids. Mid-May is the peak blooming time.

Q. The Scott Arboretum’s collection of conifers, the Pinetum, includes many types of hardy cone-bearing trees.

R. The Quercus bicolor (swamp white oaks) that form Magill Walk were planted in 1881. Several of the original trees have succumbed to storms and disease; younger trees continue the tradition of the allée.

S. The Gold Medal Plant Garden contains recipients of the prestigious Gold Medal Plant Award from the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society, which annually recognizes trees, shrubs, and vines of outstanding merit for Mid-Atlantic homeowners.

T. The original plants of the Magnolia Collection were brought to the Arboretum from Highland Park in Rochester, New York with the help of famous horticulturist Liberty Hyde Bailey. Peak bloom time is the first two weeks of April.

U. The Summer Bloom Border, next to Tarble Hall, features shrubs and small trees close to the building.

V. The Biostream was designed as a creative way to handle storm water. The rock-lined bed recharges the groundwater and helps filter out pollutants. The drainage area is surrounded by a variety of flowering shrubs and perennials.

W. The Dean Bond Rose Garden displays over 100 examples of the genus Rosa, originally designed by Gertrude Wister, former assistant director of the Arboretum, it was dedicated in 1956. Extensively renovated in 2013-15, the garden is in bloom from April until frost.

X. The Terry Shane Teaching Garden features an arbor, a water garden, and an annual border that is redesigned each season. Named for a founding member of the Associates of The Scott Arboretum, it was dedicated in 1989 as part of the Arboretum’s 60th anniversary celebration. It is located behind the Arboretum offices.