The spirit of the Hudson River Valley lives not only in art and legend but also in the delicate balance of natural and human forces that have shaped the land. Together they create a special place where gardens and landscapes are both inspired and inspiring. Here you will find the views and vision that stimulated a national artistic movement, a model for land conservation practices, and historic gardens that shaped the American landscape design profession.

Settlement patterns followed early agricultural developments and natural landforms. In the 1700s, roads were laid down, buildings constructed, and forests substantially cleared for agriculture and timber. Three early developments established the spatial organization and circulation patterns that helped shape landscape gardening in the 18th century. Flatlands with grass fields were open; estates, now largely intact at Vanderbilt Mansion, emerged in response to growing attitudes in landscape gardening concepts. The architectural relationship between houses and gardens is brilliantly demonstrated by Francis Hoppen’s terraced garden at Bithrothemil at Annandale-on-Hudson and Beatrix Farrand’s walled garden at Bellefield in Hyde Park. The garden at Wiederhold at Annandale-on-Hudson is an example of late-19th-century terraced design.

The Hudson River Valley’s landscapes and gardens remain today at the heart of the region’s distinctive landscapes and gardens. Since the beginning of its exploration, settlement and agriculture were only part of a larger vision of the Hudson River valley. Its paintings, sculptures, and the Hudson River School were largely about nature and the natural setting, a tradition exemplified by the writings of naturalist John Burroughs and the Hudson Highlands.

Flats and woods crossed the landscape, axes of orchards like those marking the entrance to Montgomery Place on Hudson and large farm fields now preserved as open space recall the village’s rich agricultural heritage and how it shapes the way we experience the land. The architectural relationship between houses and gardens is brilliantly demonstrated by Frances Hoppen’s terraced garden at Bithrothemil at Annandale-on-Hudson and Beatrix Farrand’s walled garden at Bellefield in Hyde Park. The garden at Wiederhold at Annandale-on-Hudson is an example of late-19th-century terraced design.
Map & Guide Series

Upper Hudson
Washington Park, Henry Morgue west of Empire State Plaza, Albany, 518-434-1811—Greensward used as through- and in Albany’s “Central Park” designed by Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux. The park includes specimen trees, a six-acre lake, and gardens/pleasure-grounds designed with a Romanesque eye to composition, balance, and harmony to nature.

Dyckman House, 4197 Dyckman St., New York, 718-699-2190—Creating one of his magnificent paintings, Frederic Church developed Dyckman grounds into the landscape features of his famous 1859 painting, "The Heart of the Andes." The garden is designed in the style of Philip Hone in 1840, in a classic example of country place era design featuring a formal perennials, terraced garden, and a peony with vistas of the Hudson and distant Catskills. A.J. Downing designed the garden’s romantic surroundings for a previous owner.

Monticello, 9300 Monticello Ave., Albemarle County, 434-974-9000—This historic site includes over 400 acres tended and shaped by one family for nearly 200 years. A.J. Downing designed the garden’s romantic landscape and contributed plants from his travels. The early 19th-century gardens are rotund and extensible.

Horsebarn Hill, 3197 U.S. 44/Route 55, Millbrook, 845-677-5359—The garden is inspired by Chinese painting and landscape concepts. Wood and stone features 168-acres of lush lawns, ponds, woodland, meadows, and fields and pastures. Designed by the Smiley family when they created the property in 1852. The terraced landscape gardenhere in 1852. The terraced landscape features 168-acres of lush lawns, ponds, woodland, meadows, and fields and pastures. Designed by the Smiley family when they created the property in 1852.

City Park, 20th St. at 10th Ave., New York, 212-534-5461—This historic site once included a 200-acre setting of pleasure grounds, specimen trees, and an Italian garden designed for Frederick W. Vanderbilt by James Geddes, a founder of the American Society of Landscape Architects.

Garden of the Indiand, 200 East 67th Street, New York, 212-838-7000—The terrace gardens are composed of axial lines from classical architecture, linked by formalized paths featuring Van Cortlandt Park, 214 Van Cortlandt Ave., Poughkeepsie, 845-437-5686—More than 250 rare species comprise the arboretum on the 190-acre Van Cortland park, which includes a Shakespeare garden, a native plant preserve, and an ecological preserve.

Hammond Japanese Stroll Garden, 1050 Western Ave., Albany, 518-463-5033—This traditional Japanese landscape of inner and outer woksions is set amid flowering trees, aromatic shrubs, stone sculpture, and water features.

Rockefeller State Park Preserve, Route 117, Tarrytown, 845-417-1470—Carriage roads built by the Rockefeller’s were laid through woodland, meadows, and fields and traced through the encircling of Hudson Highlands. The garden is designed by A.J. Downing with panoramic views of the Hudson.

Rugby, with tours beginning at 109 Rugby Rd., 845-987-5907—William Widener Roseower designed the garden for Brooks, an American landscape architect responsible for the Rockefeller family. The terraced gardens, with views of the Tappan Zee and the Palisades, include fountains, ornamental structures, and collections of contemporary sculpture by Pablo Picasso, Alexander Calder, Henry Moore, David Smith, and others.

Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area

The Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area is a federally funded program created under Congress in 1986. The mission of the Heritage Area is to preserve, generate, and share the nationally significant cultural and natural resources of the Hudson River Valley. The Heritage Area and the National Park Service funded the production of this map and guide. A generous grant from the American Council of Learned Societies and the National Endowment for the Humanities funded the production of this map and guide. A generous grant from the Hudson, provided additional funds for its preparation. Please send your comments or map revisions to Hudson River Valley Greenway, Capitol Building, Room 214, Albany, NY 12224; call 518-472-3826; or use this email hrv@hudsongreenway.state.ny.us. abdirac.

Mid-Hudson

Schenectady, 181 Sharon Rd., Scotia, 518-373-8307—A splendid example of classical garden design in the United States, Schenectady’s 10-acre formal gardens are laid out along axes and cross-axes with views of the 1.20-acre Waterford Park and mountain ranges.

Greenhouse, 212 Pine Grove Rd., Emmaus, 518-373-6571—This network of 19th-century carriage roads lead day-hikers through a diverse 12,000-acre landscape of cool granite, rocky outcrops, lakes, and waterfalls in the Sawmill Park.

Lower Hudson

Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area


Hudson Highlands. In the 1860s, 4010 Hyde Park Rd., Hyde Park, 845-606-2171—Co-founder of the American Society of Landscape Architects.

Hunters Point, 200 South 2nd St., S.I. St., New York, 718-454-4592—Artistic landscape architect Samuel F.B. Morse created a 200-acre landscape garden in 1852. The gardens are designed by Jansen Brothers, a display Alpine House, features 168-acres of lush lawns, ponds, woodland, meadows, and fields and pastures. Designed by the Smiley family when they created the property in 1852.

Bellefield, a country era place garden in Hyde Park, 845-265-3638—The Federal-era home of Thoreau’s view of art, nature, and history with grounds designed by AlexanderCalder, Mark di Suvero, Andy Goldsworthy, and Louise Nevelson.

Dowling Park, Carpenter Ave. at 3rd St., Newburgh, 845-565-5559—Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux created this 35-acre urban landscape park to commemorate Freeport, 1900-265-3638—Bellefield mansion serves as a National Park Service office, but the walled garden designed in 1822 by Frederick W. Vanderbilt is open to the public.

Stockbridge, 160 Pleasant Hill Rd., North East, 845-255-0752—This network of 19th-century carriage roads lead day-hikers through a diverse 12,000-acre landscape of cool granite, rocky outcrops, lakes, and waterfalls in the Sawmill Park.