

Miss Florence's Garden

Florence Griswold (1850-1937), or "Miss Florence" as her friends knew her, was an avid gardener. She was constantly in search of new and unusual plants and advertised locally that she had pansies and roses for sale. She filled her home with small, informally arranged bouquets of fresh flowers from the garden. She helped several of the artists of the Lyme Art Colony to establish their own gardens, "in which she has endeavored to infuse the air of yesteryear through the medium of good old-fashioned flowers."

After her death in 1937, her garden was neglected. In 1998, an archaeological dig identified the physical boundaries of the garden beds and walkways as well as the location of the orchard and outbuildings of the original farm estate. Paintings and historic photographs of the site, together with archaeological findings, guided the re-creation of Miss Florence's garden to its appearance circa 1910, when the colony was at its height.

The character and design of Miss Florence's garden is rooted in the Colonial Revival. Following the 1876 Centennial in Philadelphia, old-fashioned gardens filled with hardy perennials and self-sown annuals became newly popular in America. Exuberantly and informally arranged in rectangular beds close to the house, varieties such as foxglove, phlox, peony, daylily, hollyhock, climbing rose, and delphinium flourished as proud sentinels of yesteryear. Unlike the late Victorian estate gardens with their intricate and structured plantings, these gardens were more personal in nature, something that appealed to Miss Florence and the artists of the colony, who found in her garden a favorite subject for their paintings.



Miss Florence Griswold, c. 1915

Once described as "a veritable tangle of fragrant beauty," Miss Florence's garden is filled with many of the same varieties of heirloom perennials and annuals that recapture its special appeal. The vegetable plot contains varieties of asparagus, squash, and pumpkin that once served the boardinghouse table. Just as in the past, you will often find artists working in the garden today.

The Museum's Garden Gang, a dedicated group of volunteers, maintains the garden under the direction of garden historian Sheila Wertheimer.

This Visitor's Guide to Miss Florence's Garden is generously supported by a grant from [cthumanities](#).

An American Landscape

Captain Robert Griswold (1806-1882) purchased this 15-acre property in 1841 for his new wife Helen Powers Griswold (1820-1899). Together, they raised their one son and three daughters, the youngest of whom was Florence Griswold. This grand house, originally built in 1817 for the William Noyes family, became over time a country estate complete with barns, an orchard, gardens, and pastures that sloped down to the Lieutenant River. The Griswold family practiced small-scale farming, producing dairy products, cultivating corn, potatoes, peas, beans, and harvesting hay. Their livestock included cows, pigs, chickens, geese, and a horse. By the 1880s, farming on the property had declined, and much of what was grown here supplemented the table for family and guests.

During the art colony era in the early 20th century, over 300 artists, including many leading figures in American art, gravitated for regular stays at Miss Florence's. Drawn first by the town's natural beauty, they discovered an "old" New England setting that was, as one observer noted, "expressive of the quiet dignity of other days." The Griswold property was enlivened as artists set up portable easels, capturing its gardens and orchards as well as the small brook that ran nearby the boardinghouse. Barns and outbuildings found new life as informal artist studios that Childe Hassam called "just the place for high thinking and low living." Games of baseball or horseshoes were diversions that preceded lively boardinghouse dinners with vegetables and fruits from the garden.

We invite you to explore this landscape in much the same way the artists of the Lyme Art Colony once did. Walk along the banks of the Lieutenant River, including the additional riverfront property acquired in 2016, and enjoy the notable specimen trees that are identified with labels. And please take time to appreciate the abundant bird and wild life that can be found here as well.



FLORENCE GRISWOLD MUSEUM

Home of American Impressionism

96 Lyme Street, Old Lyme, Connecticut 06371

FLORENCEGRISWOLDMUSEUM.ORG

On the cover: William Chadwick (1879-1962), *Iris* (detail), undated.
Florence Griswold Museum.

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— JOURNALIST H.S. ADAMS, 1914

The Garden & Landscape of the
FLORENCE GRISWOLD MUSEUM



VISITOR'S GUIDE TO MISS FLORENCE'S GARDEN

Heirloom Blossom Guide

The following is a selective guide to the perennials and annuals found in Miss Florence's Garden. Brief planting notes accompany the entries. We invite you to enjoy the ever-changing palette of colors and textures.

PLANTING KEY

-  full sun
-  part shade
- (w)** well-drained soil
- (m)** moist soil
- (d)** dry soil

LATE SPRING/ EARLY SUMMER



Baptisia australis
Blue False Indigo
Perennial
☀️ - ☁️ / (m)



Heuchera micrantha
Coral Bells
Perennial
☀️ - ☁️ / (m)



Astilbe japonica
Plume flower
Perennial
☁️ / (m)



Platycodon grandiflorum
Balloon Flower
Perennial
☀️ - ☁️ / (m)



Ligularia stenocephala
"The Rocket"
Bigleaf Goldenray
Perennial
☁️ / (m)

SPRING



Coreopsis verticillata
Threadleaf Coreopsis
Perennial
☀️, (d)



Dicentra spectabilis
Bleeding Heart
Perennial; humus soil
☁️ / (m)



Nepeta subsessilis
Catmint
Perennial through July
☀️ / (m)



Paeonia lactiflora
Peony
Perennial
☀️ - ☁️ / (m)



Papaver orientale
Poppy
Perennial
☀️ - ☁️ / (m)

LATE SUMMER/ FALL



Rubeckia fulgida
Black-Eyed Susans
Perennial
☀️ - ☁️



Aconitum napellus
Garden Monkshood
Perennial; fertile soil
☁️ / (w)



Euphorbia polychroma
Cushion Spurge
Perennial; Can be invasive
☀️ / (m)



Iberis sempervirens
"Snowflake" Candytuft
Perennial
☀️ / (m)



Iris cristata
Crested Iris
Perennial
☁️ / (m)



Iris germanica
German Iris, Blue
Perennial
☀️ / (m)



Rosa William Baffin
Kordesii hybrid
Roses
☀️ / (m)



Philadelphus coronarius
Sweet Mock Orange
Deciduous Shrub
☀️ - ☁️ / (m)



Monarda didyma x fistulosa
Common Red Beebalm
Perennial; fertile soil
☀️ - ☁️ / (m)



Phlox Carolina 'Miss Lingard'
Garden Phlox
Perennial; fertile soil
☀️ - ☁️ / (m)



Phlox paniculata
David Phlox
Perennial; fertile soil
☀️ - ☁️ / (m)



Thymus serpyllum
"Elfin" Thyme
Perennial; loose soil
☀️ / (m)



Camassia quamash
Camassia
Spring Flowering Bulb
☀️ / (m)



Viola
Pansy
Annual
☀️ - ☁️

SUMMER



Hemerocallis middendorffii
Daylily
Perennial; fertile soil
☀️ - ☁️ / (m)



White Pet
Polyantha
Roses
☀️ / (m)



Physostegia virginiana
Obedient Plant
Perennial; Will aggressively spread
☀️ - ☁️



Cosmos bipinnatus
Cosmos
Annual; Set seeds indoors in February
☀️ / (m)



Dendranthemum
Sheffield Pink Chrysanthemum
Perennial; Will spread
☀️ / (m)