

A Message from the Joint Committee on the Library

THE Joint Committee on the Library is pleased to publish this new history of the U.S. Botanic Garden. This book not only explores the Botanic Garden's historical and architectural roots, it celebrates its vivid exhibits through a variety of colorful photographs.

The origin of the U.S. Botanic Garden dates to May 8, 1820, when President James Monroe signed a bill providing for the use of five acres on the Mall for a national botanic garden. Following the 1842 U.S. Exploring Expedition that brought plants and seeds from far regions of the globe, Congress recognized the need to create a permanent home for the collection. A small greenhouse was constructed in 1843 and placed under the direction of the Joint Committee on the Library. As the plant collection grew, a new conservatory was built in 1850 on the original site near the Capitol. With the redesign of the National Mall, the Botanic Garden was relocated and a new conservatory opened in 1933 at its present site.

For more than 150 years, the U.S. Botanic Garden has been a wonderful oasis on Capitol Hill, a living museum of plants, and a favorite destination for visitors.

The Joint Committee wants to express its appreciation to Architect of the Capitol Alan Hantman and his staff for documenting the rich history of the U.S. Botanic Garden in this book.

Through its educational programs, exhibits, and other services, all Americans can make use of the U.S. Botanic Garden's resources and benefit from its collections. It is a national treasure located only steps away from the United States Capitol.

The Honorable Vernon J. Ehlers

CHAIRMAN

JOINT COMMITTEE ON THE LIBRARY

The Honorable Ted Stevens

VICE CHAIRMAN

JOINT COMMITTEE ON THE LIBRARY





A Message from the Architect of the Capitol

THE United States Botanic Garden has had a long history and association with the U.S. Congress. It serves as our living plant museum and its exhibits interpret the role of plants in supporting earth's diverse and fragile ecosystems and in enriching human life. Since 1933, the U.S. Botanic Garden has been housed at First Street and Maryland Avenue, S.W., which includes a conservatory and four acres of outside grounds.

In 1997, the Botanic Garden Conservatory was closed to undergo extensive renovation and reconstruction. Time and the elements had taken their toll on the building and therefore, the renovation was massive and complicated. On December 11, 2001, it was reopened, ready to continue its mission to demonstrate the aesthetic, cultural, economic, therapeutic, and ecological importance of plants.

The publication of this book chronicles the history of the Conservatory and documents the beautiful and ecologically important plants and exhibits housed there. The Garden's living collections are comprised of more than 13,000 plants used for exhibition, conservation, and study.

It is an honor to serve as Acting Director of the U.S. Botanic Garden and to be responsible for the stewardship of this wonderful facility. The Conservatory is a fine asset for the Congress, the Capitol Hill community, and many, many visitors to our nation's capital.

Alan M. Hantman, FAIA

ACTING DIRECTOR OF THE U.S. BOTANIC GARDEN

ARCHITECT OF THE CAPITOL

