1. The Baptistery — The oldest building on the close, this temporary baptistry was built in 1204. Beginning in 1354, the Guild operated a gift shop called the Herb Cottage to benefit the gardens and grounds. The building is now a cafe.

2 - 17. THE BISHOP’S GARDEN

2. Norman Arch Entrance to the Gardens — The limestone arch, a memorial replica of the original 12th-century Norman arch, is the entrance to the Bishop’s Garden and Lawn, opened to the public in 1928. The arch was incorporated into the stone wall by All Hallows Guild in appreciation of the efforts of Mr. Charles Mooney, first superintendent of the cathedral grounds. By 1976, the deteriorated arch & gate required reconstruction. The exact replica was made possible from funds donated in memory of Canon Charles Linde Glenn, Canon & Sub-Dean of the Cathedral from 1968 to 1976. In 2011, the arch was damaged by a crane accident, and was repaired and reconstructed.

3. The Norman Court — The Norman Court, with its fountain, was designed by Florence Bratenahl using local stone and a 12th-century Norman arch. The arch and a 15th-century bas-relief of the Crucifixion, the Virgin Mary, and St. John are among the oldest original components of the site. These came as seedlings from Palestine. (Reportedly, they were carried to the United States in a suitcase at the turn of the last century.) This genus of cedar is native to the Blue Mountains of Morocco and offers another example of plants botanically related to the Holy Land, as Mrs. Bratenahl wished.

5. Shadow House — This garden house was designed by cathedral architect Philip Freelon and built with stones from President Grover Cleveland’s nearby summer home, Red Top. There are eight views of the garden through Gothic arch windows. A small honorary statue of baby Pan, sculpted by Edith Parsons, sits at the entrance to the Shadow House in memory of Rowan LeCompte, whose stained-glass window on the west front is a memorial to the “heart of the Garden.” The medieval garden is a garden in memory of Rowan LeCompte, whose stained-glass window on the west front is a memorial to the “heart of the Garden.” The medieval garden is a garden in memory of Rowan LeCompte, whose stained-glass window on the west front is a memorial to the “heart of the Garden.”

6. Lower Perennial Border — Spring, summer & fall perennials and bulbs flourish in blue & pale lavender tones, including camas, salvia, and asters. It is a memorial to Bishop Hinckley Fay. (1970)

7. Bishop’s Lawn and Borders — The lawn behind the Episcopal Church House is bordered by trees & shrubs including hollies, autumn blooming cherry, hydrangeas, and barberry. Shade-loving perennials here include heather, viburnum, Solomon’s seal, and brunnera. This border honors Marypeck H. Edwards. (2005).

8. Hortulus — This “little garden,” bordered by boxwood, features geometric beds planted with monastic kitchen, informal, and strewing herbs used in the 9th century. Rosemary and boxwood surround the Carolingian font. Documents from the time of Charlemagne were used as the primary sources for this planting.

9. Rose Garden — The rose bed, centered around a rectangle of turf, was part of the 1928 Olmsted design. In 1964 newer hybrids were introduced when the bed was redesigned. Roses blossom from May to November.

10. The Wayside Cross — Inscribed with the sacred monogram for Jesus & dating from early Christian pilgrimages, the cross has returned to its original place in the garden. Florence Bratenahl referred to this as the “heart of the Garden.” The medieval cross was a gift from George Grey Barnard’s collection.


12. Pool of St. Catherine — Mrs. Bratenahl designed this small pool in the shape of a primitive cross. St. Catherine is represented in the 15th-century bas-relief above the pool. (1928)

13. Upper Perennial Border — Two 15th-century bas-reliefs of saints & martyrs are embedded in the stone wall. A rare crape myrtle, often seen in monastic gardens, grows among bulbs, perennials, & annuals that bloom from early spring to winter in bold colors of red, orange, yellow, & purple. A 12th century capital from Chartres, France, serves as a birdbath.

14. The Final Garden — This inviting corner was transformed into an intimate garden room centered on a finial — a functioning outdoor amphitheater was included in the reconstruction. The exact replica was made possible from funds donated in memory of Canon Charles Linde Glenn, Canon & Sub-Dean of the Cathedral from 1968 to 1976. In 2011, the arch was damaged by a crane accident, and was repaired and reconstructed. The arch is a gift from George Grey Barnard, an art collector and sculptor (1928).

15. Samuel Yellin Gates — “They shall enter into peace that enter in at these gates” is inscribed on the top bars of the gates by Samuel Yellin, the Philadelphia wrought-iron master. (1930)

16. Pilgrim Steps — Mrs. Bratenahl designed the broad flight of 51 steps leading from South Road to Pilgrim Road, They are built of sandstone from the Aquia Creek quarry in Virginia. (1930)

17. Prodigal Son — This contemporary sculpture in Belgian granite by Henric Wurmatke was donated to the cathedral in 1958 by Coleman Jennings. The statue is shrouded by an old weeping cherry tree in an intimate setting. Near the sculpture, in the garden walk, is a lead fountain designed & sculpted by L. Corrin Strong & dedicated in memory of Rosalind Washburn Wright, a member of the All Hallows Guild Garden Committee.

18 - 21. OLMSTED WOODS & AMPHITHEATER


19. Olmsted Woods & Pilgrim Way — The Olmsted Woods are the last vestige of the extensive oak and beech forest on Mount St. Alban. A 10-year period, completed in 2008 at a cost of nearly three million dollars. Now the 105-acre property is called the Pilgrim Way, a contemplative circle, native wildflowers and shrubs, and a host of migratory birds. The original Woodland Path was started with a Founder’s Fund Award from the Garden Club of America. (1955)

20. Robert C. Morton Border — A planting of native shrubs and trees near the amphitheater entrance includes redbud, viburnum, shadbush, foxtail-grass, and hydrangea. (1985)

21. All Hallows Amphitheater — The amphitheater has long been featured in the cathedral’s history, serving as a place for outdoor services in earlier days. A functioning outdoor amphitheater was another part of Olmsted’s plan, and now this beautiful outdoor space of curved stone walls and grass walkways is once again a perfect setting for worship, contemplation, and performance. (2008)

22. Glastonbury Thorn — The tree stands in front of St. Albans School. Grown from cuttings from trees outside Glastonbury Abbey in England, it is reputed to bloom whenever royalty visits the close. According to legend, the tree originally was brought to England from the Holy Land by Joseph of Arimathea.
MEMBERSHIP & DONATIONS

All Hallows Guild

WASHINGTON NATIONAL CATHEDRAL

All Hallows Guild was founded in 1916 to provide for the care and beautification of the gardens and grounds of Washington National Cathedral. To join, send dues (tax-deductible as allowed by law) to:

All Hallows Guild
Palmer-Parrott House
26 Garfield Street NW
Washington, DC 20016

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Continuing Map Numbers

23. Phyllis Nitze Garden — This perennial and shrub garden, dedicated to the memory of Phyllis Pratt Nitze, a former President of All Hallows Guild, was donated by her family and friends. (1989)

24. Kenney Garden — East of the Nitze Garden, a woodland planting including a summer-blooming Clethra barbinervis, barberry, and American azaleas memorialized Elinor C. Kenney, given by her children. (1995)

North Side of Cathedral

25. Garth Fountain and Garden — The "enclosed garden" is located on the north side of the cathedral next to the administration building. A contemporary bronze fountain by George Tsutakawa of Seattle, Washington, is the focal point of this cloister garden. The five column capitals created by Elinor Wyman recall the five great divisions of American Indians. (1969)

26. Walker Fern Garden — Along the north side of the Cathedral College, a lovely stone walkway is bordered by a variety of ferns and other shade-loving plants. This garden honors Mallory and Diana Walker, given by their children. (2004)

West Front of Cathedral

27. West Front Oak Grove — A grove of trees with lawn, plantings, walkways, and benches completes the Bishop John T. Walker Court entrance to the cathedral. In the midst of a busy capital city captures the spirit of the original Olmsted design. Many of the plants & trees memorialize or honor individuals or groups. Among them is the Joan C. Vandermark Memorial. (1991) This garden beside the elevators is planted with boxwood, olea, viburnum, & holly

28. Church House — This manor house was from 1916 to the 1960s the residence of the Bishop of Washington and his family. It is now the seat of the Episcopal Diocese of Washington and contains mostly offices, meeting rooms and the Bishop’s Chapel. The garden and lawn were reserved for the private use of the Bishop until 1928.

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Gardens of Washington National Cathedral

WILLIAM J. W. GRAY, JR.

WASHINGTON NATIONAL CATHEDRAL

Early History

The cathedral's site was an oak and beech forest when Joseph Nourse purchased it in 1813 and moved his family from Georgetown. Nourse was appointed first Registrar of the Treasury by George Washington. In 1869 the Bishop of Washington, Henry N. Satterlee, acquired the land for the Protestant Episcopal Foundation. He had established the Cathedral Park Board with Beatrix Jones Farrand as landscape consultant. He asked Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., to ready the land for the laying of the cathedral's cornerstone on September 29, 1907 (Michaelmas). The Olmsted firm was responsible for planning the cathedral close between 1907 and 1928. Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., designed Pilgrim Road, which wound up Mt. St. Alban from Garfield St. to the cathedral. He also designed the Bishop’s Garden, with its surrounding walls, lawn, and flower beds. Leaving intact the native woodland and stream on the south slope, he clustered buildings to conserve open space. To provide a sense of historic permanence and tranquility on the close, he specified mature, evergreen plantings.

All Hallows Guild

The Guild was organized in 1916 at the desire of Bishop Harding, who worked with a group of forward-thinking women to provide for "the care and beautification of the cathedral close." The name hallows the land on which the cathedral was built, the life of Bishop Satterlee, and gifts in memory of loved ones. Florence Brown Bratenahl, wife of the first dean, joined in 1917 and went on to be a formidable fundraiser, visionary, and leader of the Guild. The first task was to raise money for plantings and to bring mature specimens of boxwood, yew, and holly to the cathedral grounds.

Mrs. Bratenahl worked closely with Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., and went on to serve as the cathedral’s landscape designer from 1928 to 1938. Her work includes the design for the Norman Court entrance to the Bishop’s Lawn, the Pool of St. Catherine, and the Pilgrim steps with adjacent plantings, as well as the landscaping of the College of Preachers and early planting plans for the Bishop’s Garden Hortulus and Upper Perennial Border.

A Garden for the Ages

The Satterlee-Olmsted-Bratenahl vision consisted of gardens suitable for a 14th-century Gothic cathedral, with plants of historical interest, plants of the Bible and Christian legends, and native plants. Among the earliest gifts to the Nourse family was boxwood from Dolly Madison and Thomas Jefferson. A century later, Mrs. Bratenahl found boxwood from George Washington’s Hayfield Manor for the Hortulus, and from Ellerbee Plantation in Virginia for the Bishop’s Garden. Two of the plants whose origins trace back to the Holy Land are the cedars and the fig trees. The Rosa gallica (Rosa), Lilium candidum (Madonna Lily) and Iris germanica ‘Florentina’ (iris) grew beside earliest known herbs in the Hortulus. Native specimens of oak, dogwood, and magnolia are found throughout the close.