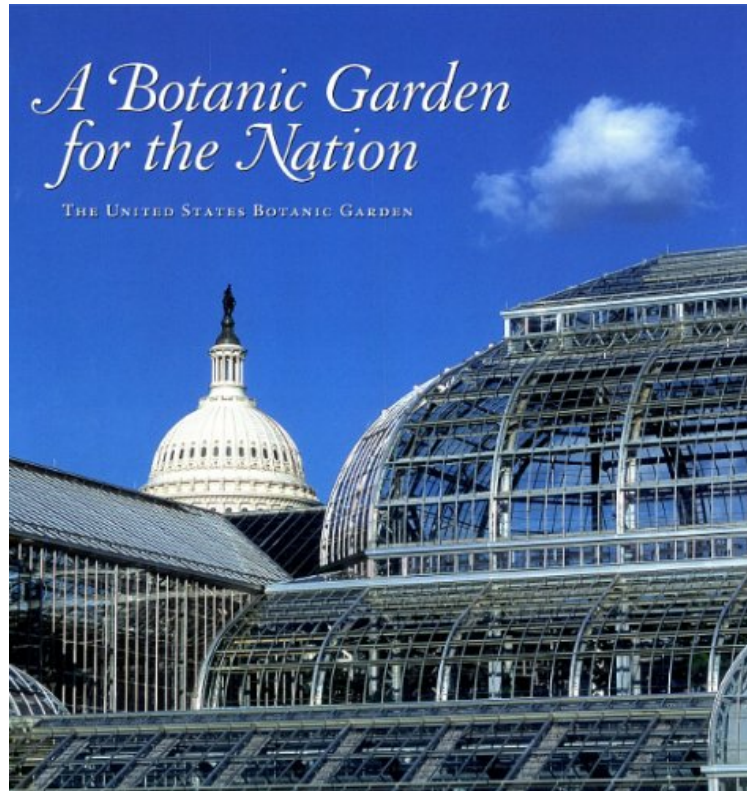


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A Botanic Garden for the Nation: The United States Botanic Garden

Anne Catherine Fallen

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NOTE: NO FURTHER DISCOUNT FOR THIS PRINT PRODUCT--OVERSTOCK SALE -- Significantly reduced list price while supplies last This beautifully illustrated book presents the first comprehensive look at the U.S. Botanic Garden in Washington, D.C. Through historical documents and colorful photos, A Botanic Garden for the Nation tells an important story about this special place. The story begins in 1796 with the support of George Washington, who believed a Botanic Garden would be a significant addition to the capital. Along with other early leaders, including

Thomas Jefferson and James Monroe, Washington understood the value of plants for the health and economic well-being of the nation, a message that still resonates today. Through sumptuous photographs, *A Botanic Garden for the Nation* offers a tour of the Conservatory, starting with the formal Garden Court, with its foundations and special flower collections, and continuing through every plant environment, including the lush Jungle, colorful Orchid House, and spare World Deserts. The engaging text explores ecosystems and reveals details about interesting plants and plant collections. Related products: Environment Nature resources collection can be found here:

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Book review for CBHL Newsletter: Charlotte Tancin, Librarian Hunt Institute for Botanical Documentation
Fallen, Anne-Catherine. *A Botanic Garden for the Nation: The United States Botanic Garden*. Contributors: William C. Allen, Karen D. Solit, and the staff and gardeners of the United States Botanic Garden; project coordinator: Holly H. Shimizu. Washington, D.C.: for sale by the ... U.S. Government Printing Office, 2006. 178, [2] pp., color illus., portraits, garden plans. ISBN 0-16-076772-5. \$69.00 (casebound, cloth). A free electronic version (zip file) is available at <http://www.usbg.gov/history/A-Botanic-Garden-for-the-Nation-The-United-States-Botanic-Garden.cfm>. Each chapter is also available as smaller pdf files at <http://www.gpoaccess.gov/serialset/cdocuments/sd109-19/browse.html>. The historical mission of the United States Botanic Garden is neatly capsulized on the half title page of this volume: "To collect, cultivate, and distribute." Writer and photographer Anne-Catherine Fallen has put together an updated history and presents it along with a description of the Garden as it is today, its mission, functions and successes, all illustrated with historical images and her own vivid and eye-catching photographs. Fallen builds on the scholarly study done by Karen Solit whose *History of the United States Botanic Garden, 1816-1991* was published in 1993. The Garden's origin is in a 1796 letter from George Washington to the city commissioners asking them to incorporate a botanical garden into the city plan. Twenty years later a group of science-minded citizens formed the Columbian Institute for the Promotion of Arts and Sciences, and Congress approved a bill in 1820 granting them a tract of public land to develop. President Monroe, a member and supporter of the Institute, agreed to let them place a botanical garden next to the Capitol, and the Institute began to collect seeds and plants to propagate. However, funds for maintenance were insufficient, interest dwindled, and eventually the site reverted to the federal government and was neglected for several years. In 1850, a home was needed for the botanical collections of the U.S. Exploring Expedition, and the Garden was reinvigorated. The Expedition, under the command of Lt. Charles Wilkes, had set sail for the South Seas in 1838. Over four years they traveled more than 87,000 miles throughout the Pacific, including an exploration of Antarctica. The crew included two botanists, another naturalist, and two artists, and they collected and pressed more than 50,000 plant specimens, gathered propagation material, produced numerous drawings, and brought back 250 living plants. In 1850 Congress appropriated \$5,000 to relocate a greenhouse from the Patent Office and re-establish the botanical garden at the foot of the Capitol. The Garden was officially named in 1856 and regular funding was established for it. After that, new explorations, such as that of Commodore Matthew Perry in 1852, brought more exotic plants, and in 1855 Congress appropriated \$1,500 to house plants brought back from Japan. Throughout the second half of the 19th century, the collections expanded and seeds were distributed across the country. The Garden gained prominence for its beautiful landscaping and unusual plants. Then, in the early 20th century, a new plan for the city was created that included an open mall between the Capitol and the Washington Monument. The plan was opposed for two decades because it necessitated moving the Garden and uprooting many stately trees in the process. The Garden was finally relocated in the 1920s to the site that it occupies today. A new conservatory was built in 1933, and the Garden's mission was expanded to include education as a critical component of exhibits, in addition to the earlier mission of plant collection and distribution. In the 1990s the conservatory had to be completely rebuilt, so the Garden was closed for several years and the staff used that time to develop a master plan to provide guiding principles for the renovated exhibits. The Garden reopened in 2001 and is thriving at the beginning of the 21st century. Following a contributed chapter on the architectural history of the garden by William C. Allen, Fallen outlines the Garden's varied programs and partnerships and describes its many thematic plantings both indoors and out, along with Bartholdi Park and the new National Garden, which was opened to the public in October 2006. *A Botanic Garden for the Nation* is well written, and Fallen's many photographs highlight both the beauty and the diversity that characterize the Garden, making her book even more of a fitting tribute to a national jewel. Susan C. Eubank Arboretum Librarian
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