PROJECT PROFILE

LEARNING WHILE YOU REST

Whoever believes learning about plant classification is boring has never been to the Chicago Botanic Garden's Heritage Garden.
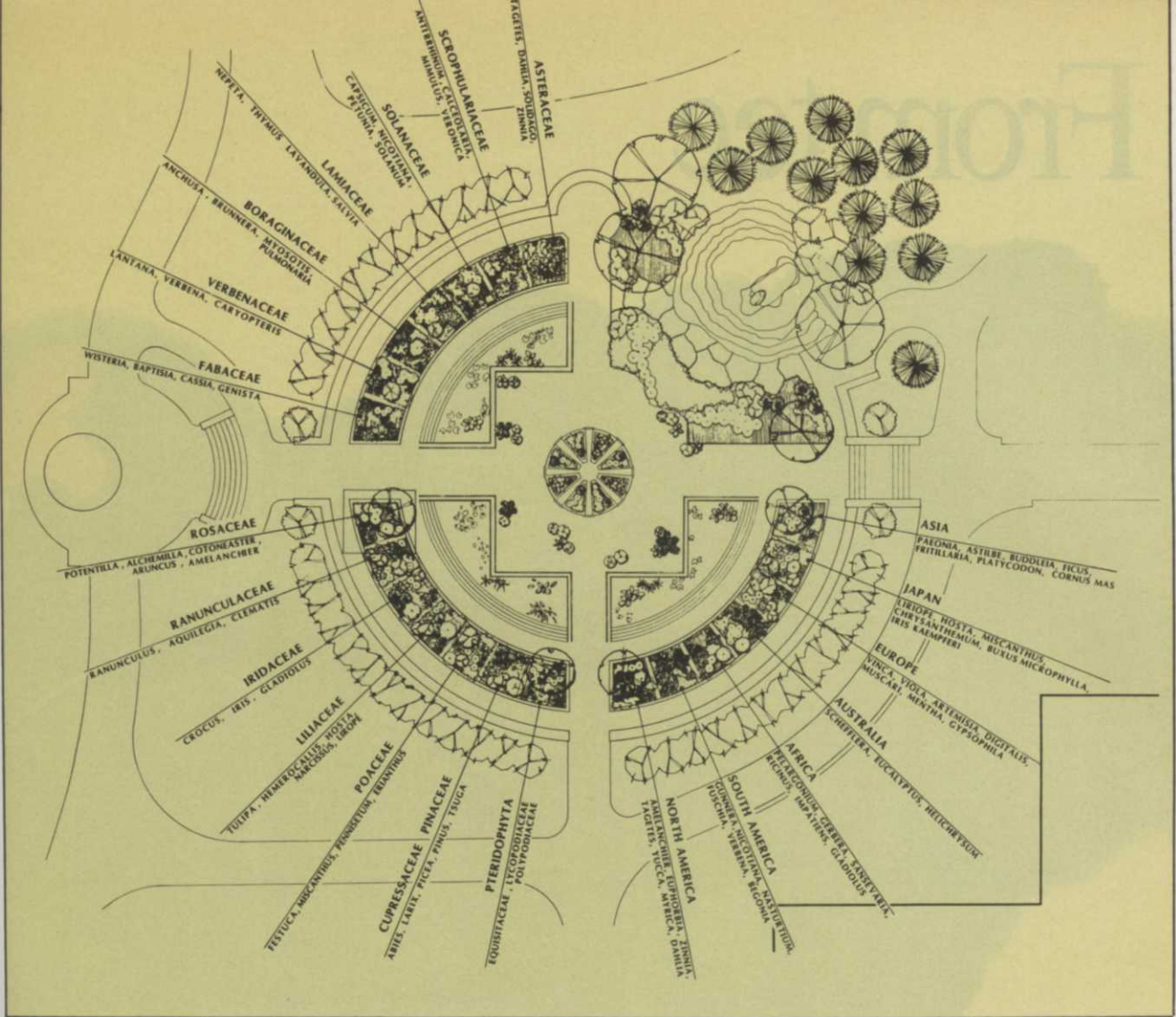
by Will Perry, managing editor

In a city, a garden takes on a special, almost spiritual significance. It's a place where the form and order of concrete, glass and steel bow to the earth and sun. A place where city-dwellers can go to be reminded of their individuality.

The Chicago Botanic Garden in Glencoe is such a place for Chicago-area residents and visitors. Its purpose exceeds providing the respite craved by thousands of Chicagoland residents, though certainly the tranquility of the site offers it. The Garden has taken upon itself the mission of stimulating interest in and appreciation of horticulture to its visitors. It has therefore become more than an urban escape route. It is a campus for students interested in meshing progress and nature better—and enrollment is growing.

Nowhere at the Garden is this mission more obvious than at

The Heritage Garden is based on the Botanic Garden of Padua of 1543, considered the first true botanic garden of western civilization.

Plant family and geographic labels (garden diagram):

SCROPHULARIACEAE — ANTIRRHINUM, CYMBALARIA, MIMULUS, VERONICA
ASTERACEAE — TAGETES, DAHLIA, SOLIDAGO, ZINNIA
SOLANACEAE — CAPSICUM, NICOTIANA, PETUNIA, SOLANUM
LAMIACEAE — NEPETA, THYMUS, LAVANDULA, SALVIA
BORAGINACEAE — ANCHUSA, BRUNNERA, MYOSOTIS, PULMONARIA
VERBENACEAE — LANTANA, VERBENA, CARYOPTERIS
FABACEAE — WISTERIA, BAPTISIA, CASSIA, GENISTA
ROSACEAE — POTENTILLA, ALCHEMILLA, COTONEASTER, ARUNCUS, AMELANCHIER
RANUNCULACEAE — RANUNCULUS, AQUILEGIA, CLEMATIS
IRIDACEAE — CROCUS, IRIS, GLADIOLUS
LILIACEAE — TULIPA, HEMEROCALLIS, HOSTA, NARCISSUS, LIRIOPE
POACEAE — FESTUCA, MISCANTHUS, PENNISETUM, FESTUCA
CUPRESSACEAE
PINACEAE — ABIES, LARIX, PICEA, PINUS, TSUGA
PTERIDOPHYTA — EQUISETACEAE, LYCOPODIACEAE, POLYPODIACEAE
NORTH AMERICA — AMELANCHIER, EUPHORBIA, ZINNIA, TAGETES, YUCCA, DAHLIA
SOUTH AMERICA — CANNA, NICOTIANA, MAXIMILIANA, VERBENA, BEGONIA
AFRICA — PELARGONIUM, GERBERA, SANSEVIERIA, FUCHSIA, IMPATIENS, GLADIOLUS
AUSTRALIA — SCHEFFLERA, EUCALYPTUS, HELICHRYSUM
EUROPE — VINCA, VIOLA, ARTEMISIA, DIGITALIS, MUSCARI, MENTHA, GYPSOPHILA
JAPAN — LIRIOPE, HOSTA, MISCANTHUS, CHRYSANTHEMUM, IRIS KAEMPFERI, BUXUS MICROPHYLLA
ASIA — PAEONIA, ASTILBE, BUDDLEIA, FICUS, FRITILLARIA, PLATYCODON, CORNUS MAS

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the Heritage Garden. Installed in 1983, the 1.5 acre site is ideally located between the parking lot and the Education Center, thereby serving as a sort of foyer where the visitor is introduced to the world of plants. You approach it across an elegant sweep of steps lined by cascading water, flowers and planters. The Garden's purpose, as stated by its designer, landscape architect Geoff Rausch of Environmental Planning and Design Partnership, Pittsburgh, is to "present the historic and scientific value of plant classification in an interesting and aesthetically pleasing setting, and to promote the role of the botanic garden as a scientific institution."

The Heritage Garden design is based on the Botanic Garden of Padua of 1543, considered the first true botanic garden in Western civilization. The central walk is made of red brick, called Calvert Colonial Paver in 20 to 20 rose full range color and limestone veneer. The brick was supplied by Victor Cushwa & Sons, Inc., of

Williamsport, Md. and the stone by William C. Weber Stone Co. of Stone, Iowa. The walk is reminiscent of the paving patterns used in Padua. At the garden's center is a physic garden, which contains potted specimens of tender plants and floats over a large lilly pool of aquatic plants. The raised stone planters at the perimeter contain beds arranged by plant families.

A fitting tribute
The Garden is divided into four quadrants that represent the four seasons and the four corners of the earth. One of the quadrants contains a large bronze sculpture of Carl von Linne (Linnaeus) designed by Robert Berks. Linnaeus, whose binomial system of plant classification and nomenclature brought form and order to the field of biology in general and horticulture in particular, is captured kneeling beside his notebook, studying a rose. The contrast between the comparatively disorganized planted area along the gateway and the organized garden is in itself a tribute

to Linnaeus and his work. The plants that complement the statue are low-growing shrubs and ground covers for the most part.

The remaining three quadrants are devoted to teaching about plant classification. They include plantings grouped by geographic area and plantings grouped according to a taxonomic system.

The geographic quadrant summarizes classification by origin, a system used at many botanic gardens in Europe. Since many different climates are represented, certain plants are grown in greenhouses and set out in the summer.

The two quadrants with taxononic plantings are arranged according to the Englerian system, a morphological system based on observed similarities and complexities of flower parts.

Pools filled with bubbling jets surround a physic garden at the site's center.

It is hoped visitors to the Heritage Garden will begin to understand modern plant classification systems. It is believed that this understanding is the first step toward appreciation. **LM**