

Historical Facts

- ~ In 1872, Richard Power was hired as the first Public Gardens superintendent, and for three generations the Power family continued in that role.
- ~ The Halifax Public Gardens was established in 1874.
- ~ What exists today as the Family Lawn Area was originally a public lawn tennis court established in 1876.
- ~ More recently, on September 28, 2003, Halifax was hit by a category two hurricane. The Public Gardens were extensively damaged and lost many trees. The Public Gardens Foundation raised over a million dollars to help restore the Gardens.
- ~ Local residents have always had a strong emotional attachment to the Public Gardens. There is a long tradition of celebrating personal achievements at the gardens by taking photographs for graduations, weddings, anniversaries and civic events.
- ~ The municipality maintains this historic garden as a free public garden.

The Halifax Public Gardens was established in 1874 by the amalgamation of two older gardens, the Nova Scotia Horticultural Society Garden (laid out in 1837) and an adjacent public park (opened in 1866). In 1872, Richard Power was hired as the superintendent. He introduced an axially symmetrical plan which governs the overall design of the site. Over the years, he oversaw the introduction of the bandstand (designed by architect Henry Busch), fountains, statues, and cast iron gates as well as establishing the bedding out of annuals in highly designed carpet beds, redesigned Griffin's Pond and introduced water fowl. He also initiated specimen planting, including many exotic and semi-tropical species. The whole was united by a system of gently curving gravel pathways within a perimeter of mature trees and wide sidewalks acting as buffers between the park and the surrounding city.

PUBLIC GARDENS
HALIFAX

Public Gardens

Open daily from 8:00 a.m.
until one half hour prior to dusk.

May until November

www.halifax.ca/publicgardens

The Story of the Public Gardens

The Halifax Public Gardens is one of the finest surviving examples of Victorian Gardens in North America. It was established in 1874 by the amalgamation of two older gardens, the Nova Scotia Horticultural Society Garden (laid out in 1837) and an adjacent public park (opened in 1867). The Nova Scotia Horticultural Society objectives were to establish the best horticultural examples of vegetables, trees and choice flowers. The current site of the Public Gardens was formerly a swampy piece of ground covered with brambles. A grant of two thousand dollars from the City of Halifax enabled this new ground to be laid out as a free Public Garden for the citizens of Halifax.

In 1872, Richard Power was hired as the Garden's Superintendent. Richard Power provided the vision for the Gardens that we enjoy today. Superintendent Power spent the next 45 years creating a formal Victorian Garden and was responsible for the installation of the following features:

- ~ the symmetrical layout of tree lined paths, lawns and flower beds
- ~ a network of curved gravel paths
- ~ select specimen plants
- ~ carpet beds, scroll beds, and serpentine beds
- ~ the Bandstand
- ~ Diamond Jubilee and Boer War fountains and statuary.



"Bandstand"

Rules and Services

The Halifax Public Gardens has existed for over 140 years. Please respect the following rules to maintain the Garden for future generations.

- ~ No pets
- ~ No bikes
- ~ No jogging
- ~ No smoking
- ~ No feeding the birds and waterfowl
- ~ Lawn activity only permitted on the Family Lawn Area

Wedding ceremonies are not permitted in the Gardens. Photos are welcome and no appointment is necessary.

Services

The Public Gardens is open from May until November from 8:00 a.m. until one half hour prior to dusk.

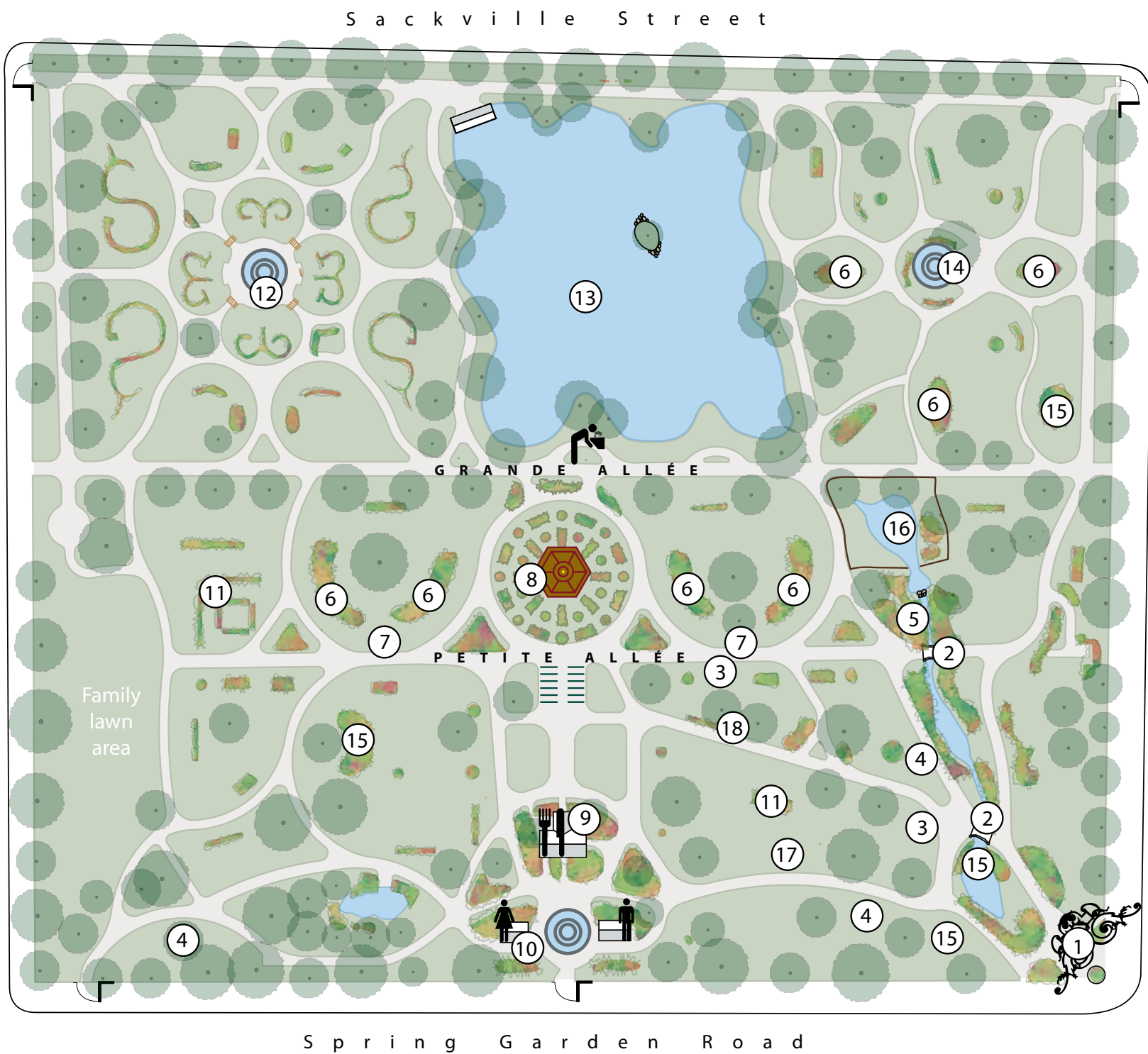
- ~ Security is on duty in the Gardens
- ~ Sunday Band Concerts from mid-June to mid-September (free of charge)
- ~ Wheelchair accessible, wheelchairs available in Horticultural Hall
- ~ Photos are permitted in the Gardens
- ~ Public Washrooms
- ~ Light Refreshments

For Public Gardens or general enquiries, please contact 311.
Visit us online at www.halifax.ca/publicgardens

The information provided in this brochure is courtesy of the Halifax Public Gardens National Historic Site Commemorative Integrity Statement (April, 1999), prepared by Historic Sites.
visit: www.historicplaces.ca

PUBLIC GARDENS

Garden Features



1. The Main Entrance Gates

The ornate iron gates were built in Scotland in 1890 and originally stood on South Park Street. In 1907 they were moved to their present location when the Gardens cast iron perimeter fence was erected. The main entrance gates were restored in 2003.

2. Bridges

In 1911, two small concrete bridges were built to span the watercourse in the Southeast corner of the Gardens. The upper bridge commemorates Francis J. Fitzgerald, a member of the North West Mounted Police who lost his life in the Yukon. The bridges are very popular spots for photographs.

3. Carpet Beds

These beds are planted with a variety of compact, slow growing plant material and are carefully trimmed to create logos, patterns and letters. These two beds are typically used to commemorate a special event or community organization.

4. American Chestnut Tree

A native of the eastern United States, this commercially important species was almost destroyed by blight in the early 1900's.

5. Semi-arid and Desert Plants

Victorian explorers started the garden trend of collecting and cultivating exotic tropical plants from around the world. The collection can include cactus, palms, agaves, dracaenas, aloes and bird of paradise. The tropical and exotic plants in this bed are stored in the greenhouse during the winter for replanting each summer.

6. Herbaceous Beds

These beds are made up of perennial plants that survive through the winter, coming back to life each spring. Examples include phlox, foxglove, poppy, globe thistles and delphiniums.

7. Statues and Vases

In 1887, Chief Justice Sir William Young bequeathed the three Roman Goddess statues along the Petite Allée and the six vases surrounding the Bandstand. The statues were Ceres Goddess of Agriculture, Diana Goddess of The Hunt, and Flora Goddess of Flowers. Only Ceres Goddess of Agriculture and Flora Goddess of Flowers remain.

8. The Bandstand & Bandstand Beds

Architect Henry Busch designed the Bandstand in 1887 in honour of Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee. Its compact geometric shape, ornate gingerbread decoration and use of bright primary colours are quintessential qualities of High Victorian design. There are thirty two floating beds around the bandstand, providing spring bulb colour and a bright contrasting show of annuals.

9. Horticultural Hall

Built in 1847, Horticultural Hall is a simple classical design. It was erected by the Halifax Horticultural Society to serve as the meeting room and the building's cellar was used to store winter vegetables. Horticultural Hall has been restored since Hurricane Juan. Light refreshments and ice cream are available here.

10. Horticultural Hall Plaza

This new entrance from Spring Garden Road was built with money raised by the Public Gardens Foundation. It features beautiful gates, a landscaped plaza, a new fountain, and washrooms.

11. Dahlia Beds

These beds include a collection of show dahlias from pompom to large cactus types. A Dahlia Festival is held annually in late August.

12. Diamond Jubilee Fountain, Serpentine and Scroll Beds

The Jubilee Fountain was installed in 1897 to commemorate Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee. This cast metal fountain, in High Victorian style, includes classical water babies, sea serpents and the nymph Egeria. Surrounding the Jubilee Fountain are the intricate and balanced scroll and serpentine beds.

13. Griffin's Pond and Model Ships

The largest of the Gardens ponds, it was redefined in 1878-79 from a square to its present more natural shape. Griffin's Pond has floated various models from small sailboats to replicas of the Titanic and the Queen Mary I.

14. Boer War Memorial Fountain

Erected in 1903, the statue is of a Canadian Mounted Rifleman built to commemorate the service of Canadian soldiers in the South African campaign. The wide, relatively short weeping trees surrounding the fountain are Weeping Camperdown Elm. This unique tree is produced by grafting weeping branches onto a standard trunk. The dramatically majestic Weeping Beech by the Boer War Memorial Fountain is a favourite shade spot in the Public Gardens.

15. Rhododendron Beds

The Gardens are fortunate to have a collection of rhododendrons. The largest of these are mature Iron Clad Rhododendrons.

16. Public Gardens Geese

During the summer Toulouse Geese are a favourite attraction.

17. Vegetable Bed

This bed includes a variety of new and Heirloom varieties which provide a colourful display and it also demonstrates companion planting which naturally reduces pests.

18. Fruiting Shrubs and Trees

This bed contains a nice selection of exotic fruiting trees and shrubs perfect for the Victorian Garden.