

TOWN CENTER PUBLIC GARDENS

An easy, flat walking loop within Swarthmore Town Center. With many places to sit and places to eat, from a sandwich to a full meal, you can easily accomplish the tour in a brief time or take as long as you wish to enjoy the town center shops and garden spaces.

Enjoyment of public life in Swarthmore is enhanced through the natural beauty provided by The Scott Arboretum, the Swarthmore Horticultural Society, and the Swarthmore Garden Club. The Scott Arboretum encompasses the entire Swarthmore College campus and is covered in other trails. The Swarthmore Horticultural Society (SHS) has developed twelve small gardens within the town center that are the main focus of this trail. These gardens are designed and maintained by a large number of SHS volunteers; all plants, tools, and other material are entirely funded by private donations. Walk the trail and appreciate how different the town character would be if it had no gardens.

Theme: Horticulture

Amenities: Gardens, Benches

Surface: Paved, 0.4 miles long

Slope: Mostly Flat, 7 ft elevation gain

Hazards: Uneven Sidewalks

Emergencies: Call 911

Difficulty Rating: Easy Stroll - I walk infrequently, though I'd like to do more. I want to see new things, but not very far off the beaten (i.e. paved) path. A few rises here or there might be OK, but no steep paths or sidewalks, please.

Resource(s) shown on the map:

Borough Hall P & R: Metered parking lot and street parking, free on Saturday and Sunday. Borough's restrooms are open during Borough Hall or Library hours 7 days, with a water fountain and restrooms in the hallway and benches outside.

P: Street parking on Lafayette Avenue, free with a 2-hour limit.

Swarthmore Senior Citizens Assn.
<https://swarthmoreseniors.com>
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Waypoints Shown On The Map:

1. Entrance Garden: On the left side of the Borough Hall entrance walkway is a sunny garden with herbs; on the right, a woodland shade garden beneath a large river birch. This project of the Swarthmore Garden Club exemplifies the spirit of shared effort within the Swarthmore gardening community.

2. Raised Bed: The location of this raised bed near the Borough Hall entry makes it one of the more prominent plantings year-round. The spring design traditionally includes bulbs. Summer generally features a tropical showstopper with contrasting or coordinating foliage and flowers.

3. Library Window Garden: This long, narrow flowerbed is nestled under the library windows. A granite block border defines the bed and buffers it from the lawn, which experiences heavy traffic from amphitheater events and holiday activities. Both the granite border and the symmetry of the windows add a sense of formality to the space. This formality is complemented in spring plantings by masses of flowering bulbs; in summer plantings by colorful foliage. This space provides an inspiring model for the partial shade garden.

4. Library East Garden: Located to the right of the Library Window Garden (closer to the Methodist Church), this garden features many flowering and evergreen shrubs, as well as spring bulbs and seasonal flowers.

5. Central Park Garden Containers: The tall, elegant containers feature seasonal color and interest throughout the year. Container plants are chosen for their drama, and the summer plantings are selected for hardiness in the full sun and heat. These containers are SHS's newest public garden project, and they were selected to complement the Central Park town green and plaza.

6. Co-op Garden: In keeping with its location beneath the patio of the Swarthmore Co-op, the Borough's fabulous food emporium, this garden features many culinary plants among the ornamentals. For several years, cardoons and bananas have been focal points, and they have become the backbone for other annuals, vegetables, herbs and flowers. This garden is a constant challenge to keep flourishing in this heavily used space. Plants are chosen for their toughness and drought tolerance.

7. Lincoln Way Garden: This garden, located directly across tiny Lincoln Way from the Co-op, underwent a major revamping of its original design. New trees and foundation plants were installed in 2017. The garden features hellebores and colorful bulbs in spring.

8. Clock Plaza Garden: This garden's hot, sunny location requires tough, drought-tolerant plants. A backdrop of evergreens and an array of spring bulbs and annuals bring energy and color to this concrete space. The large containers feature colorful shrubs in the winter and tough annuals for summer.

9. Large Sidewalk Containers: Fine Garden Creations, a local business, donated these 24 containers, which are replanted twice a year with seasonally appropriate specimens. Management of the containers is a shared effort: the plants are purchased by Swarthmore Borough and the SHS; Fine Garden Creations installs the plants; summer watering is done by the Swarthmore Public Works Department; and summer maintenance is done by the SHS.

10. Gravel Garden: Installed in 2017, the roundabout features a colorful mix of tough plant species planted in gravel. The low-maintenance plants are placed in a naturalistic design and maintained by the College's Scott Arboretum.

11. Post Office Alex's Garden: This garden was dedicated in October 2010 to the memory of Alex Santa Barbara, a beloved window clerk at the Swarthmore Post Office, who died in April 2009. The garden, filled with perennials, grasses, and shrubs, features hellebores in the spring. A small area is reserved for seasonal annuals. (If continuing back to Park Avenue, walk down the sidewalk with the iron railing between the Post Office and the brick building.)

12. Centennial Park: Created in 1993 to commemorate Swarthmore's 100th anniversary of incorporation, this tiny, popular, centrally located park is used by all ages, both day and night. Robust plants provide multi-seasonal interest. (If continuing south on the route to the Post Office, walk down the alley between HOM and Garnet Cleaners.)

13. War Memorial Garden: This triangular-shaped plot is a full sun garden with radiating heat from the sidewalk and roadways. While the key element influencing plant selection for this bed is always drought tolerance, this garden presents unique challenges: plants must have enough visual impact to draw the eye away from the fence, but they must not obstruct a driver's line of vision or the view of the Memorial.

14. Butterfly Garden: This garden features native plants that attract butterflies and other pollinators. It opened in 2016 with a generous gift from Swarthmorean Amy Hart.