



# Vanished Gardens: Finding Nature in Philadelphia

*Sharon White*

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New to living and gardening in Philadelphia, Sharon White begins a journey through the landscape of the city, past and present, in *Vanished Gardens*. In prose now as precise and considered as the paths in a parterre, now as flowing and lyrical as an Olmsted vista, White explores Philadelphia's gardens as a part of the city's ecosystem and animates the lives of individual gardeners and naturalists working in the area around her home.

In one section of the book, White tours the gardens of colonial botanist John Bartram; his wife, Ann; and their son, writer and naturalist William. Other chapters focus on Deborah Logan, who kept a record of her life on a large farm in the late eighteenth century, and Mary Gibson Henry, twentieth-century botanist, plant collector, and namesake of the lily *Hymenocallis henryae*. Throughout White weaves passages from diaries, letters, and memoirs from significant Philadelphia gardeners into her own striking prose, transforming each place she examines into a palimpsest of the underlying earth and the human landscapes layered over it.

White gives a surprising portrait of the resilience and richness of the natural world in Philadelphia and of the ways that gardening can connect nature to urban space. She shows that although gardens may vanish forever, the meaning and solace inherent in the act of gardening are always waiting to be discovered anew.

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