

# Home/Garden

## Hildene

### Flowers and lightness are special at Robert Todd Lincoln's home

Nestled in the Equinox Valley, but set on a promontory that gives panoramic views of the valley and the surrounding mountains, Hildene is as comfortable and fresh today as it was in 1905 when Robert Todd Lincoln and his wife Mary Harlan Lincoln moved in to enjoy the years of his retirement.

The house was designed for leisure and comfort. The first hint is the front lawn which bears an uncanny resemblance to a golf fairway. Inside are "annunciators" to summon the maids and gadgets that close the window shutters from inside. Robert Todd Lincoln even arranged the front entry hall so that he could sneak into his study without encountering guests that might be visiting. The rooms are bright and airy. The vestibule has a bank of French doors that allow the sunlight to pour in. Outside is a terrace and beautiful formal garden.

The garden was designed by the Lincoln's younger daughter, Jessie, who had been inspired by the cathedrals on her tour of Europe. She patterned the garden after a stained glass window with flowers providing the brilliant colors and neatly clipped hedges standing in for the leading. In the spring, peonies are the star of the show, all of them planted by the Lincolns themselves. Not a single peony has been added.

Other spring bloomers include foxglove, irises and those beautiful spring blues, false indigo, delphinium and anchusa. As we come into the autumn, pink phlox, spider flowers (cleome), rosy yarrow and asters are in bloom. There are even a few pink-and-white lilies and also large blocks of golden zinnias and anthemis, silvery artemesia and snowy feverfew. A subtle accent is the spiky blue globe thistle (echinops). Finally, the graceful arch at the "top" of the "window" is filled with beds of roses that bloom all season long — lovely pink Betty Prior floribundas, delicate Sea Foam hybrid shrubs and pink Fairy polyanthas. There is also a dramatic bed of the luminous red rose, Mr. Lincoln.

Once you have gotten over the first flush of pleasure in this carefully planned garden, you can start to appreciate the knowledge and skill it takes to design a garden with such a long season of bloom. It is certainly one of the

Pat  
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Between  
The Rows



prettiest textbook lessons I have ever seen. The plants are all carefully and clearly labeled and it is obvious that many plants, like the false indigo and peonies, have foliage that stays attractive, even after the flowers have gone by.

Flowers fill the house as well — at every season. This year Hildene has scheduled their second annual Dried Flower Show for October 21 through the 30th. Anyone may enter a dried flower arrangement; you need not live in Vermont, but you must be an amateur. Professionals can pay a higher fee to show an exhibit that will not be considered in the competition.

General guidelines require that only natural dried materials (flowers, grasses, leaves) be used, nothing dyed or ornamented, but they can be purchased. Your exhibit should be arranged in a Victorian container or basket, but its good to remember that the house has a clean elegant simplicity, there is nothing dark or cluttered about it.

There are many classes: dining room, vestibule, parlor, night table, bedroom bureau, pedestal and wreaths. A panel of six judges will award ribbons in each class and the Best of Show arrangement will also receive \$100 worth of pottery donated by The Bennington Pottery. There is a \$5 entry fee for each exhibit. You should call Hildene for an entry form which will give you complete details as soon as possible.

Whether you go with an entry or to admire the exhibits, this is a good time to visit the museum.

**IF YOU GO:** Hildene is located on Historic 7A in Manchester Village, Vermont, 2 miles south of the junction of routes 7A and 30. Tours are given daily from mid-May through October. Grounds open at 9:30 a.m. and the last tour begins at 4 p.m. Admission is \$5 per adult; \$2 for children ages 6-14, children under 6 free. Visitors are welcome to bring a picnic lunch. For more information call (802) 362-1788.

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