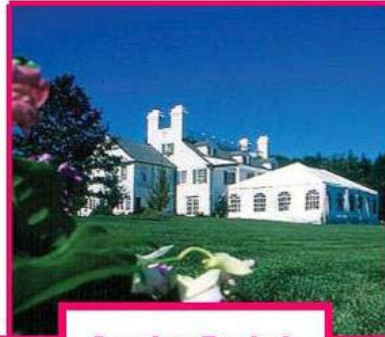


Lasdon Park and Arboretum



Lasdon Park & Arboretum "A Horticultural Hub"

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Overview of Lasdon Park

Lasdon Park & Arboretum is the "horticultural hub" of Westchester County. The Lasdon estate, originally called Cobbling Rock Farm, was acquired by William and Mildred Lasdon in 1939. The main house of the estate was built in 1933 after the original house was destroyed due to a fire. The house is modeled after George Washington's home in Virginia. The Lasdon estate was used as a country retreat. The Lasdons had interest in horticulture and loved to travel. Along these travels, they brought back many trees and planted them at the estate. When William Lasdon died in 1986, Westchester County purchased the estate. The county wanted to obtain this land in order to preserve the land and history of the area. Westchester County has been developing and embellishing the collections on the property. Today, the garden is open to the public seven days a week. The garden hosts a variety of events such as, weddings, antique shows, flower exhibits, concerts, and horticulture courses.

There are many different influences shown at the Lasdon Arboretum. Many of the gardens and trails were created either by the Lasdons or as a dedication to their work and love for horticulture. The Lasdons became wealthy after creating a major pharmaceutical company. This wealth gave William Lasdon the ability to import plants from all over the world. These foreign species of plants made the design of the garden very unique. There are other influences that are evident throughout the rest of the garden, like the influence of America's past in the Historic Tree Trail and the county's ties with Jingzhou, a city in the People's Republic of China.

Overview of Lasdon Park

Among the most beautiful plantings in the arboretum are the azalea garden, the yellow magnolia grove, the lilac and pine collections, and a flowering tree grove. Surrounding the arboretum is a pond and 200 acres of woodlands that contain many specimen trees that provide habitat for deer, coyote, fox, wild turkey and other native mammals. The oversized azalea garden contains hundreds of red, white, pink, yellow, and lavender azaleas that create a hillside of color in the spring. Next to the azalea garden is a dwarf conifer collection containing a variety of pines, spruces, firs, and cypresses. The combination of open land, wetland, streams, and mature trees makes excellent wildlife habitat for many species of birds and mammals.

Mr. and Mrs. Lasdon were well known philanthropists, founding the William & Mildred Lasdon Foundation, and giving to medical research and the performing arts. Not only has the William & Mildred Lasdon Foundation continued to give since the passing of the couple, but their daughter, Nanette Laitman, has also continued the giving nature of the family. After the passing of her parents, Laitman funded the creation of a one-acre garden on the property in remembrance of the Lasdons. The Friends of Lasdon Park and Arboretum volunteer organization was begun in 1977 to preserve The Westchester County Parks Department when it's funds were shrinking. This organization is run on donations, hoping to better Westchester County parks.

Lasdon Park and Arboretum is located in Somers, New York however it has a Katonah mailing address. Both towns and the county of Westchester take great pride in this garden. Lasdon Park and Arboretum is important to Westchester County servicemen and women from various branches of the military. Located at the park are four memorials to honor military service. They are The Trail of Honor, The Korean War Memorial, The Westchester Vietnam Veterans Memorial, and The Merchant Marine Memorial. Other memorials located at Lasdon Park that honor the local area include the William and Mildred Lasdon Memorial Garden, The Chinese Friendship Pavilion and Cultural Garden, Ongoing Botanical, and The Mildred D. Lasdon Bird and Nature Sanctuary.

Lesson Plan

Target Age Group for Lesson: Grades 3-5

Objectives :

- 1) Students will be able to identify the importance and significance of the Lasdon park.
- 2) Students will be able to identify the location, history, and nature of an assigned portion of the park and present the information as a report to the class.
- 3) Students will be able to identify the other areas of the garden by taking notes during presentations made by classmates.

Materials: Handout with background information on the park, paper, pencils, crayons, worksheets to take notes during presentations.

Introduction: Activate prior knowledge by asking students if they have ever been to a garden and allow them to talk about any experiences. Then introduce the Lasdon Park and Arboretum and discuss the significance it has to the region. Also introduce Mr. and Mrs. Lasdon and explain their importance to the different gardens they will be visiting. Students will be broken into groups of 4. Once divided, students will be assigned roles as navigator, artist, history expert, or nature expert. Students will then be assigned a garden area to report on: the azalea garden, the Historic Tree Trail, the memorial garden, the Chinese Friendship Pavilion or Cultural Garden.

New York State Standards Addressed:

- 1) Students will use a variety of intellectual skills to demonstrate their understanding of major ideas, eras, themes, developments, and turning points in the history of the United States and New York.
- 2) Students will use a variety of intellectual skills to demonstrate their understanding of major ideas, eras, themes, developments, and turning points in world history and examine the broad sweep of history from a variety of perspectives.
- 3) Students will study family, neighborhood, community, New York State and United States history, culture, values, beliefs and traditions and the important contribution of individuals and groups.

Lesson Plan

Procedure:

- 1) Introduction to Lesson Plan Activity (10 min)
- 2) Assign groups / assign roles within group (10 min)
 - a. Navigator- draw map to area of garden and writes a description of how to get there from garden entrance.
 - b. Artist- draw a picture of the area of the garden that the group visited and a description of the picture .
 - c. History Expert- write a summary of the history of the area with when it was created, why, and by whom.
 - d. Nature Expert- write a summary of the plant life located in the section and the arrangement of the plants.
- 3) Bus ride to Lasdon Park and Arboretum (25 min)
- 4) Tour guide takes class around the garden to provide an overview of the whole garden, information on Mr. and Mrs. Lasdon, and to show each group where their assigned area is. (1 hour)
- 5) Students will visit their assigned area of the garden and complete the assignments for their roles. (30 min)
- 6) Students will ask tour guides any questions that they might have about their section of the garden. (10 min)
- 7) Students will have lunch in the garden and have time to talk about how they will present to class (30 min)
- 8) Bus ride back to school (25 min)
- 9) Work sheets will be handed out to take information down about the area of the gardens that their group did not cover. (2 min)
- 10) Each group will present their area of the garden and each group member will talk about their role. (45 min)
- 11) Class discussion summarizing the trip and lesson (5 min)

Conclusion: After the lesson is complete, students will have worked together to gather information on the Lasdon Park and Arboretum. Students will have learned about the history of the garden and its importance. They will have learned about Mr. and Mrs. Lasdon and the role they played in the garden's creation and the community around the garden. They will have learned about the landscape design of the garden and the influences that helped from it, and why gardens such as this one, consists more than just flowers.

Lasdon Park and Arboretum



Route 35
Somers, NY 10589
(914) 864-7268



Hours: Daily, 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Veterans Museum is open on Weekends from 12-4. Gift shop is open spring and summer weekends only.

Admission: FREE

Park Regulations: 1.) Enjoy trees and plants without climbing or disturbing them. 2.) Carry trash out of the park. 3.) Use recycling bins. 4.) Leave dogs and other pets at home.

Historical Description: The Lasdon estate was originally called Cobbling Rock Farm and was acquired by William and Mildred Lasdon in 1939. William Lasdon is known for establishing a major pharmaceutical company and for his philanthropist endeavors. They used the estate as a country retreat. The Lasdon family had great interest in horticulture and loved to travel. They brought back much plant life and planted them at the estate. When William Lasdon died in 1986, Westchester County purchased the estate. The formal grounds almost remain as they were originally designed. Westchester County is continuously developing and maintaining the collections on the estate.

The Site: Lasdon Park and Arboretum is a magnificent 234-acre property of woodlands, open grass meadows and formal gardens that offer a picturesque area to view various tree, shrub and flower specimens from all over the world. Lasdon Park is bordered on the south and east by New York City watershed property, the Amawalk River and Muscote Farm. On the west is a 20-acre Mildred D. Lasdon Bird and Nature Sanctuary.

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Website Links

Friends of Parks: Donate to Lasdon Park and other parks of Westchester County! This site allows you to donate with the purchase of a tree, bench, or memorial plaque.

<http://www.friendsofwestchesterparks.com/>

Hudson Valley – Attractions: Coming to the Hudson Valley? This site provides information about Lasdon Park, as well as other surrounding attractions.

<http://www.westchestertowns.com/htm/lmk/Link0298.html#LasdonParkArboretum>

Hudson Valley Voyager: This site outlines the beautiful Lasdon Park and Arboretum. Plan your trip by reading about all the beautiful attractions Lasdon Park has to offer!

<http://www.hudsonvalleyvoyager.com/regions/sh/sites/lasdonarboretum.htm>

Lasdon Park: This brochure informs you of all Lasdon Park has to offer. Park hours, garden information, and events are included.

<http://www.co.westchester.ny.us/parks/brochures/LasdonParkmain.htm>

Lasdon Park and Arboretum: This site provides information on the history and gardens of Lasdon Park. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lasdon_Park_and_Arboretum

The Hudson Valley's Field of Joy: This New York Times article highlights some of the Hudson Valley's beautiful gardens. Read about Lasdon Park and others here.

<http://travel.nytimes.com/2007/07/13/travel/escapes/13gardens.html>