

Title: **Vistas of the Morris Arboretum**

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Abstract:

Sorting and describing vistas can be quite simple. At the Arboretum we have main vistas and secondary views. Sorting of this type can be based to some extent on individual preference but trying to distinguish the level of importance for different view is important. Main vistas have a high priority for maintenance and a high architectural or aesthetic value. Another reason for an area to be designated as a main vista is its location or visual connectivity with important garden features. This paper is focused on the importance of this connectivity, which was the original idea the Morrises had when creating their garden. Secondary views are those that have developed naturally and are smaller or seen from fewer locations.

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INTRODUCTION

As we know from old pictures and other documents, the Morris Arboretum was not always covered by mature plants as it is today. Originally the plan the Morrises had for the garden was to keep the garden complex, connected and able to be viewed from certain places of importance. John Morris enjoyed romantic features and walking through the garden drawn by views from one feature to another. Today observers can see this idea while walking in the English Park and observing the view from the Mercury Loggia to the Step Fountain. Unfortunately there are not so many great or shall we say historic vistas left at the Arboretum.

During the past decades, preceding the present management, the appearance of the Arboretum has changed dramatically because of irregular maintenance and random planting. Not all the changes are negative. The aging of plant material gave birth to new views and created important garden features including old tree specimens and shrub masses. Today the value of old specimens and the importance of parts of the collection prevent the frantic restoration of historic vistas, but there is still the opportunity to reconsider the value of the original Morrises' concept of preserving views when adding to the collection. Especially after the decline and removal of certain plants we should consider keeping the view open instead of immediately replacing plants and provide an opportunity for historic vistas to be recreated.

The function of the garden is mainly divided between educational-scientific uses and recreational uses. An important part of both functions is landscape architecture. From this point of view, we can call the Morris Arboretum a landscape park with romantic features. This helps us to determine the rules in plant design and the importance of vistas connecting one feature with another and guiding our perception of the Arboretum. This idea is somewhat in conflict with the Arboretum's purpose because of limited planting areas. Our goal here is to combine the architectural point of view with expanding the collection. This project should serve as a vista management plan and as well as a helpful guide for selecting new planting areas.

CONCLUSION

This project was created not only for mapping current views but also to start a discussion about the importance of vistas and architectural expression of the place versus expanding the plant collection. It is important to keep both ideas in harmony and sometimes sacrifice part of collection to preserve the architectural meaning of the garden. I hope this project serves as inspiration because of expected changes in the future and encourages the staff to contemplate the soul of the Morris Arboretum.

APPENDIX A: MAIN VISTAS

1 - MERCURY TEMPLE & STEP FOUNTAIN



Location:	English Park
Seasonal importance:	All seasons, especially fall
Maintenance:	Prune oak branch (32-0166 A), limiting the view and surrounding shrubs to enhance the visibility from Step Fountain side; prune maple by Mercury Temple (81-503-I)
Description:	One of the most important views in the Arboretum, this vista offers the overview of the English Park from the Mercury Loggia. The view showcases the Step Fountain surrounded by attractive plantings. White oak and other shrubs nicely frame this vista. However, the vista is visually limited when observed from the Step Fountain. The Mercury Loggia disappears from sight when shaded, which is most of a day.

2 - STEP FOUNTAIN & ROSE GARDEN



Location: English Park

Seasonal importance: Winter, all seasons if restored

Maintenance: Remove or do not plant substitute for declining yellowwood (32-0036-A) and consider future vista expansion.

Description: One of potential vistas is visually connecting two important architectural features and offers great re-connection of two Arboretum sides, divided by the creek and dense planting in the surrounding. Visitors coming to see the Rose Garden would be encouraged to discover the opposite side of the garden, attracted by a great view to one of the loveliest water features in the gardens. Restoration of this view could be controversial, because of planned replacement of declining yellowwood.

3 - SEVEN ARCHES AREA & METASEQUOIA GROVE



Location: English Park

Seasonal importance: Fall (various plant's fall color)

Maintenance: no planting zone

Description: This is one of the great Metasequoia vistas and a big opening into the English Park meadow presented when walking towards Seven Arches from the path along Hillcrest Avenue.

4 - SEVEN ARCHES & KEY FOUNTAIN



Location: English Park

Seasonal importance: Summer (fountain in use)

Maintenance: Maintain the frame of vista and prune branches interfering with view, Cherry (59-119-B)

Description: Originally there were more points of importance to see from Seven Arches to the Fernery. Today, you can still catch glimpses of this vista, especially in winter. It's worth attention in the future, after old specimens decline.

5 – GATES HALL & AZALEA MEADOW



Location:	Gates Hall, connection path to parking lot
Seasonal importance:	Fall (dogwood and other fall colors)
Maintenance:	Prune surrounding hollies periodically every 3 - 5 years
Description:	This popular vista is part of the staff's view every day as they walk from the parking lot to their offices. It offers a nice picture of the Azalea Meadow, centered with sculpture and framed by dark canopies of various holly species.

6 – WIDENER AREA & WETLAND



Location:	Widener Center, Magnolia Slope, and Wetland
Seasonal importance:	Fall (Wetland plants in bloom, fall color)
Maintenance:	Do not expand into this view area with plant collection. After removal of declining specimens, reconsider their replacement according to this view - beech (54-0279-A).
Description:	The most famous vista in the Morris Arboretum runs through the Magnolia Slope towards the Wetland. This vista is enjoyed by hundreds of visitors every time they enter or leave the Arboretum. Perceptive visitors can discover features of Bloomfield Farm, while enjoying this view. Its value is obvious from the picture above. The feeling of open space is priceless.

7 – ROSE GARDEN & METASEQUOIA GROVE



Location:	Rose Garden
Seasonal importance:	Summer, fall (rose flowering period)
Maintenance:	Limb up hemlocks (H-19), necessary for view number 8 in secondary views.
Description:	This vista follows the main axis through the Rose Garden and ends with the opportunity to observe the magnificent dawn redwood grove. Visitors can observe the entire Rose Garden and let their steps being guided by this view.

8 - GREENHOUSE & ENGLISH PARK



Location: Greenhouse area

Seasonal importance: Spring (cherries in bloom)

Maintenance: Requires pruning of cherry (54-119-D), do not replace with another tree after its removal and keep the view open

Description: This big opening in to the heart of the English Park can be observed from the sun-exposed bench near the Greenhouse and from the path below. This is a nice metasequoia view!

9 – ROSE GARDEN SUMMER HOUSE & METASEQUOIA GROVE



Location:	Rose Garden
Seasonal importance:	All seasons
Maintenance	Remove lowest branch on maple (54-0691), keep meadow, no further planting
Description	Another vista from Summer House, providing a view of Metasequoia grove or Summer House from the path below the slope.

10 – ORANGE BALUSTRADE & PENNOCK GARDEN



Location:	Holy Slope area
Seasonal importance:	Summer (Pennock Garden in full bloom)
Maintenance:	Should be opened further towards Step Fountain, see presentation
Description:	Beautiful vista from Orange Balustrade through Pennock Garden leads all the way to the English Park and is one of the few linear features in Morris Arboretum.

APPENDIX B: SECONDARY VISTAS

1 – ENGLISH PARK & PENNOCK GARDEN



Location: English Park

Seasonal importance: Winter

Maintenance: Light pruning of Oriental Planetree (64-217-A),
reduce Ginkgo (35-6156-A) interfering with view

Description: This view guides observer's eyesight through the whole valley. It is an important connecting link between two creek sides and as well to the new Pennock Garden from other side of Arboretum. Another important feature is the beautiful Atlantic Cedar. This view is not easily seen during summer because of foliage cover.

2 - JAPANESE OVERLOOK & STEP FOUNTAIN



Location: English Park

Seasonal importance: Winter

Maintenance: Restore the view to Step Fountain; remove maple (54-1152-A) – decayed, interfering with nearby spruce, out of scale; thin maple (54-1151-A);

Description Japanese Overlook was designed on the top of the Japanese garden to offer a view in to the English Park, Water Steps or Swan Pond. Today's scale of surrounding trees is inadequate to the original Japanese garden design.

3 - KEY FOUNTAIN & GREENHOUSE



Location: English Park, Sculpture Garden

Seasonal importance: Spring (azaleas in bloom), fall (maple color)

Maintenance: Continually limb up trees in view

Description: This interesting vista can be another optical link between the English Park and other parts of the Arboretum through the meadow in the Sculpture Garden. After proper pruning and with good maintenance, visitors can enjoy this well-framed vista with the frog sculpture and many seasonal points of interest.

4 - GREENHOUSE & WISSAHICKON CREEK



Location: Sculpture Garden

Seasonal importance: All seasons

Maintenance: Removal of Magnolia (2000-150-A) & Maackia (2000-149-A)

Description: If opened, this would be the only view using Wissahickon Creek as a focal point. Observers can enjoy this view through Sculpture Garden, improved with dynamic reflections on water surface.

5 – SPRING HOUSE BRIDGE & SWAN POND



Location: Spring House

Seasonal importance: All seasons

Maintenance: Requires pruning of shrubs on creek banks

Description: Very dynamic vista, following the stream through bridges all the way down to the Swan Pond. If well restored and maintained, this dynamic view of the water feature would provide interest during all seasons.

6 – MARBLE FOUNTAIN & AZALEA MEADOW



Location: Azalea Meadow

Seasonal importance: All season

Maintenance: Maintain pines to frame the view

Description: View offered while walking between Pennock Garden and Orange Balustrade. It is also valuable from opposite side of the view.

7 – VISITOR PARKING LOT & WETLAND



Location:	Visitor Center area
Seasonal importance:	Winter (view expanded into the Bloomfield Farm area)
Maintenance:	Requires regular pruning of trees and shrubs at the bottom part of view frame
Description:	This is probably one of the first views visitors discover after arriving at the Arboretum. This vista highlights the feeling of open space and higher elevation of the Morris Arboretum.

8 - TOP OF THE HILL & ROSE GARDEN



Location:	Widener Center area
Seasonal importance:	Rose season if restored
Maintenance:	Remove the part of buckeye from planned view, limb up hemlocks (H-19) by the Rose Garden entrance
Description:	Views from the top of a hill hold great potential. Lot of visitors wandering around the sculpture – Two Lines would be able to enjoy one more view from this high elevation point!

9 – TOP OF A HILL & PENNOCK GARDEN



Location:	Visitors Center area
Seasonal importance:	Summer (<i>Canna ssp.</i> flowers)
Maintenance:	Improve by pruning lower branch on oak (53-500); remove fragrant epaulette-tree (questionable health)
Description:	Another view from top of a hill holds potential for well-framed opening to Pennock Garden.

10 – FERNERY & TOP OF A HILL



Location:	Greenhouse area
Seasonal importance: *	Fall (Black Tupelo fall color)
Maintenance:	Do not expand with collection
Description:	This view connects Top of a Hill with Fernery, through path leading towards Visitor Center. Good example of view located under tree canopies.

11 – ROSE GARDEN FOUNTAIN & PATH FROM PARKING LOT



Location:	Rose Garden
Seasonal importance:	Summer – fall (fountain in use, roses in bloom)
Maintenance:	Regular pruning of Rose Garden shrubs in sight of interest
Description	Very neat view into Rose Garden, while walking from parking lot area. View centered on Rose Garden fountain.

12 – Baxtor Overlook & Swan Pond



Location:	Garden Railway area
Seasonal importance:	Spring (Cherry framing the view in bloom)
Maintenance:	Light pruning of Cherry, Ginkgo and Chionanthus (35-6753-B)
Description:	Enhancing this view will draw attention to the importance of this neat, sometimes forgotten overlook.

13 – Rose Garden Summer House & Swan Pond area



Location:	Rose Garden
Seasonal importance:	Winter (Weeping Elm branching structure, Swan Pond)
Maintenance:	Keep the meadow in place, no planting area
Description:	View from Summer House, connecting Rose Garden with Swan Pond. Focal point is great Weeping Elm. Not really a big vista, but aesthetically important open area.

14 – English Park openings



Location: English Park

Seasonal importance: All seasons

Maintenance: Maintain the view frame; regular pruning

Description: This is an example of the few small views to English park, opening and closing while walking downhill from Mercury Temple. On map presented with same number and distinguished by alphabet letters.

15 – Azalea Meadow openings



Location: Azalea Meadow

Seasonal importance: All seasons

Maintenance: Regular attention

Description: One of the few openings in Azalea Meadow from Oak Alley represents a few other views in this area. Single views are drawn in the map with same number but distinguished by alphabet letters.