

Botanical Gardens: A World Tour
The Royal Greenhouses, Laeken, Belgium, and Chanticleer Gardens, Pennsylvania
with Karl Gercens
Sunday, February 11, 2024 – 4:00 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. ET

The Royal Greenhouses, Laeken, Belgium

During the 19th century, progress in construction techniques, especially the use of metal and glass as construction materials, made a new type of building possible: the greenhouse.

In 1873, architect Alphonse Balat designed for King Leopold II a complex of greenhouses which complement the castle of Laeken, built in the classical style. The complex has the appearance of a glass city set in an undulating landscape.

The monumental pavilions, glass cupolas, wide arcades that cross the site like covered streets, are much more than an anecdote on the architectural applications of iron and glass or on little greenhouses of exotic plants. What the Royal Greenhouses express concerns architecture and, specifically, a major construction programme: the "Ideal Glass Palace".

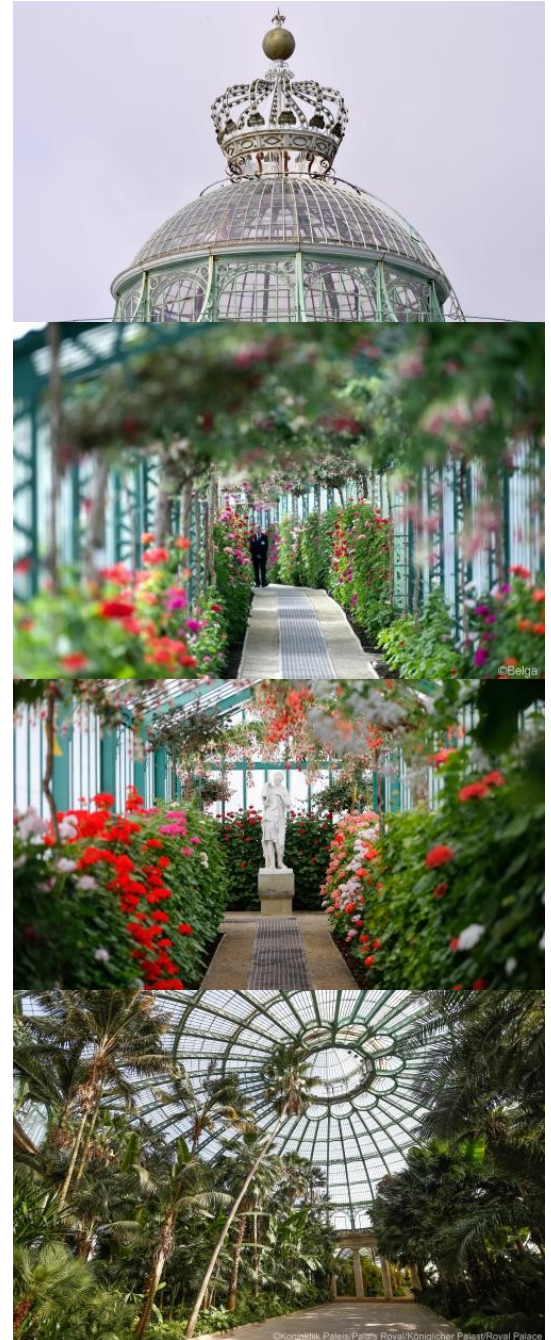
They are the culmination of various meetings, letters, sketches and plans exchanged between architect Alphonse Balat and King Leopold II. But above all, they inspired the new Belgian architecture of the day, and their influence spread, with Art Nouveau, throughout the world.

The present-day plant collection at the Greenhouses in Laeken is valuable from three viewpoints:

- Some of the plants belonging to King Leopold II's original collections still exist.
- The current collections still respect the spirit that prevailed when the original collections were planted.
- Finally, the Royal Greenhouses still contain an enormous number of rare and valuable plants.

Each year, in the spring, the Greenhouses of Laeken are opened to the public, during almost three weeks. This tradition has been carried on for a century.

The Pier: Royal Greenhouses in Laeken - The Pier Built in 1886-1887, the Pier Greenhouse was intended to receive guests when the King was holding court in the Winter Garden or the Dining Room Greenhouse.



The staircase leads to the Winter Garden. At the ends of the Pier are two statues by Charles Van der Stappen, Dawn and Evening. Medinillas (a tropical plant from the Philippines) are laid out in Chinese vases brought back by King Leopold II from a trip to the Far East while he was still Duke of Brabant.

The Winter Garden: Designed by architect Alphonse Balat and built between 1874 and 1876, the Winter Garden was the first greenhouse in the imposing city of glass which would be built over thirty years on the Laeken estate. The dimensions of this greenhouse allowed tall palm trees, the majority of which date from the time of Leopold II. As soon as it was completed, this greenhouse was used for royal receptions.

<https://www.monarchie.be/en/heritage/royal-greenhouses-in-laeken>



Chanticleer Gardens, Pennsylvania

Chanticleer has been called the most romantic, imaginative, and exciting public garden in America. The garden is a study of textures and forms, where foliage trumps flowers, the gardeners lead the design, and even the drinking fountains are sculptural. It is a garden of pleasure and learning, relaxing yet filled with ideas to take home.

The garden has evolved greatly since the death of the owner in 1990. As the home of the Rosengartens, Chanticleer was beautiful and green with impressive trees and lawns. Most of the floral and garden development you see today has occurred since 1990, designed by Chanticleer staff and consultants.



There are seven Horticulturists, each responsible for the design, planting, and maintenance of an area. The areas are continually evolving, each with its own feel, yet joined together as one complete unit. The Teacup Garden and Chanticleer Terraces feature seasonal plants and bold-textured tropical and subtropical plants. These areas change greatly from year to year. Non-hardy plants overwinter in greenhouses and basements.

The Tennis Court, Ruin, Gravel Garden, and Pond Garden focus on hardy perennials, both woody and herbaceous. The Tennis Court builds on the idea of foliar display introduced in the Teacup. The Ruin is a folly,

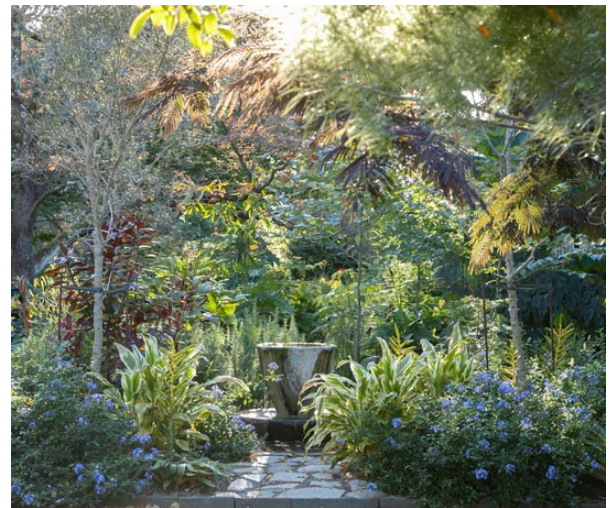
built on the foundation of Adolph Rosengarten, Jr.'s home. It is meant to look as if the house fell into disrepair. The Gravel Garden is hot and dry, a touch of the Mediterranean in Pennsylvania. The Pond area is exuberantly floriferous.

Asian Woods and Bell's Woodland are shady areas. The former features natives of China, Korea, and Japan; the latter, plants of eastern North America. The Serpentine celebrates the beauty of agricultural crops. The cutting and vegetable gardens produce flowers for our arrangements and food for our tables. Surplus goes to a shelter. The parking lot is our "low maintenance" area, with hardy plants that are neither irrigated nor fertilized. Staff build furniture, fences, gates, bridges, and drinking fountains during the winter in converted garages.



We take our educational responsibilities seriously but interpret them a bit differently than other public gardens. Instead of labeling every plant, which would distract from the visual effect, we encourage guests to speak with the gardeners about our 5,000+ plants. Plant lists and photographs are in handmade boxes and available online. Study our designs and borrow ideas if you'd like. Take courses we offer in collaboration with other horticultural and art organizations. Internships, scholarships, and staff exchanges help the careers of garden professionals.

We strive to improve our environmental impact. We reuse, recycle, and compost. Solar panels produce 20% of our electricity. Cisterns capture approximately 50,000 gallons of rain water for irrigation and recharge. Integrated pest management keeps pesticide usage low. Healthy soil makes for healthy plants; we have fertilized our lawns organically for over a decade. Meadows and sedges replace some lawn areas and we are eliminating invasive exotics. Since 1990, we've planted hundreds of trees here and along local streets. Furniture is now made from wood cut on the property or with reused wood. We recently exposed a creek long entombed in a pipe. The path in Bell's Woodland is made of shredded tires.



The Chanticleer Foundation owns 50 acres, 35 of which are open to the public. The remaining acreage is in agriculture, woodland, service areas, and staff housing. The main path is just under a mile in length.

We hope you feel like a special guest of the Rosengartens. Sit and enjoy the views. Relax, read, converse, meditate. Feel the sun on your back and the grass beneath your feet as you listen to the birds and enjoy the scents of the garden.

<https://www.chanticleergarden.org/aboutus.html>

The Chanticleer Story

The Chanticleer estate dates from the early 20th-century, when land along the Main Line of the Pennsylvania Railroad was developed for summer homes to escape the heat of Philadelphia. Adolph Rosengarten, Sr., and his wife Christine chose the Wayne-St. Davids area to build their country retreat. The family's pharmaceutical firm would become part of Merck & Company in the 1920s.

The Rosengartens hired architect and former classmate Charles L. Borie to design the house, which was completed in 1913. Landscape architect Thomas Sears designed the terraces as extensions of the house. A 1924 addition converted the summer home into a year-round residence and the family moved here permanently.

Mr. Rosengarten's humor is evident in naming his home after the estate "Chanticleer" in Thackeray's 1855 novel *The Newcomes*. The fictional Chanticleer was "mortgaged up to the very castle windows" but "still the show of the county." Playing on the word, which is synonymous with "rooster," the Rosengartens used rooster motifs throughout the estate.

Adolph and Christine gave their two children homes as wedding presents. They purchased a neighboring property for son Adolph, Jr. and his bride Janet Newlin in 1933. It is now the site of the Ruin. Daughter Emily's house, located at today's visitor entrance, was built for her in 1935. It is presently used for offices and classrooms.

Adolph, Jr., bought his sister's portion of the estate following her death in the 1980s. He didn't move into the main house, but used it for entertaining and kept it as it was when the family lived there. The house is open for tours by reservation. Adolph, Jr., left the entire property for the enjoyment and education of the public following his death in 1990. A nine member Board of Directors, six of whom are Rosengarten relatives, oversees The Chanticleer Foundation. The garden opened to the public in 1993. There are 20 full-time staff, of whom two manage facilities and 14 are gardeners and groundskeepers.

<https://www.chanticleergarden.org/history.html>

