

Perennials

Bigroot Cranesbill (*Geranium macrorrhizum* 'Ingwersen's Variety')

An excellent ground cover for the Upper Midwest, this semi-evergreen perennial has pale pink flowers and light-green aromatic foliage.

Featherleaf Rodgersia (*Rodgersia pinnata* 'Superba')

Known for its boldly veined leaves, this shade-tolerant perennial produces fluffy astilbe-like flowers in midsummer followed by ornamental red seed heads in fall. Bloom colors range from white to reddish pink.

Fireworks Goldenrod (*Solidago rugosa* 'Fireworks')

This American variety of goldenrod received the best overall rating from the Garden's Plant Evaluation Program. Small yellow flowers are borne in late summer on curved, threadlike panicles, creating a dramatic display as the weather cools.

Joe-Pye Weed (*Eupatorium fistulosum* 'Gateway')

'Gateway' is a cultivated variety of the popular native species of Joe-Pye weed, growing shorter and bushier than the native prairie plant. Butterflies frequently feed on the nectar of its tiny, dusky-rose flowers that are borne on large compound flower heads. In autumn, the flowers turn into seed heads that remain attractive through the winter.

Panicle Hydrangea (*Hydrangea paniculata* 'Brussels Lace')

Long, lacy, cone-shaped panicles of creamy white flowers are displayed on this hydrangea from late summer into early autumn. Blooms fade to rose-purple, then tan, as they age. This is one of the hardiest hydrangeas for harsh Midwest winters.

Golden Shower Tickseed (*Coreopsis verticillata* 'Golden Shower')

One of the most popular perennials, this cheerful bright yellow starry flower blooms much of the summer. It has finely-textured leaves, likes full sun and grows up to 3 feet tall.

Ornamental Grasses and Sedges

Feather Reed Grass (*Calamagrostis x acutiflora* 'Karl Foerster')

'Karl Foerster' is a feather reed grass that is valued for its early bloom (in June), vertical lines and ability to grow in wet soil. Flowers emerge a feathery purplish-green and turn golden as they mature. Clumps can grow to 5 feet tall, and provide attractive landscape texture well into the winter.

Palm Sedge (*Carex muskingumensis*)

This native clump-forming sedge gets its scientific name from the Muskingum River in Ohio, and its common name from its resemblance to miniature palm fronds. It is easy to grow in moist soil.

Prairie Sky Switch Grass (*Panicum virgatum* 'Prairie Sky')

An upright, columnar ornamental grass, 'Prairie Sky' has powdery blue foliage that turns yellow in fall. Its finely textured, dark-red flowers form an airy cloud over its foliage in midsummer and fade to beige as the weather cools in fall.

Red Switch Grass (*Panicum virgatum* 'Shenandoah')

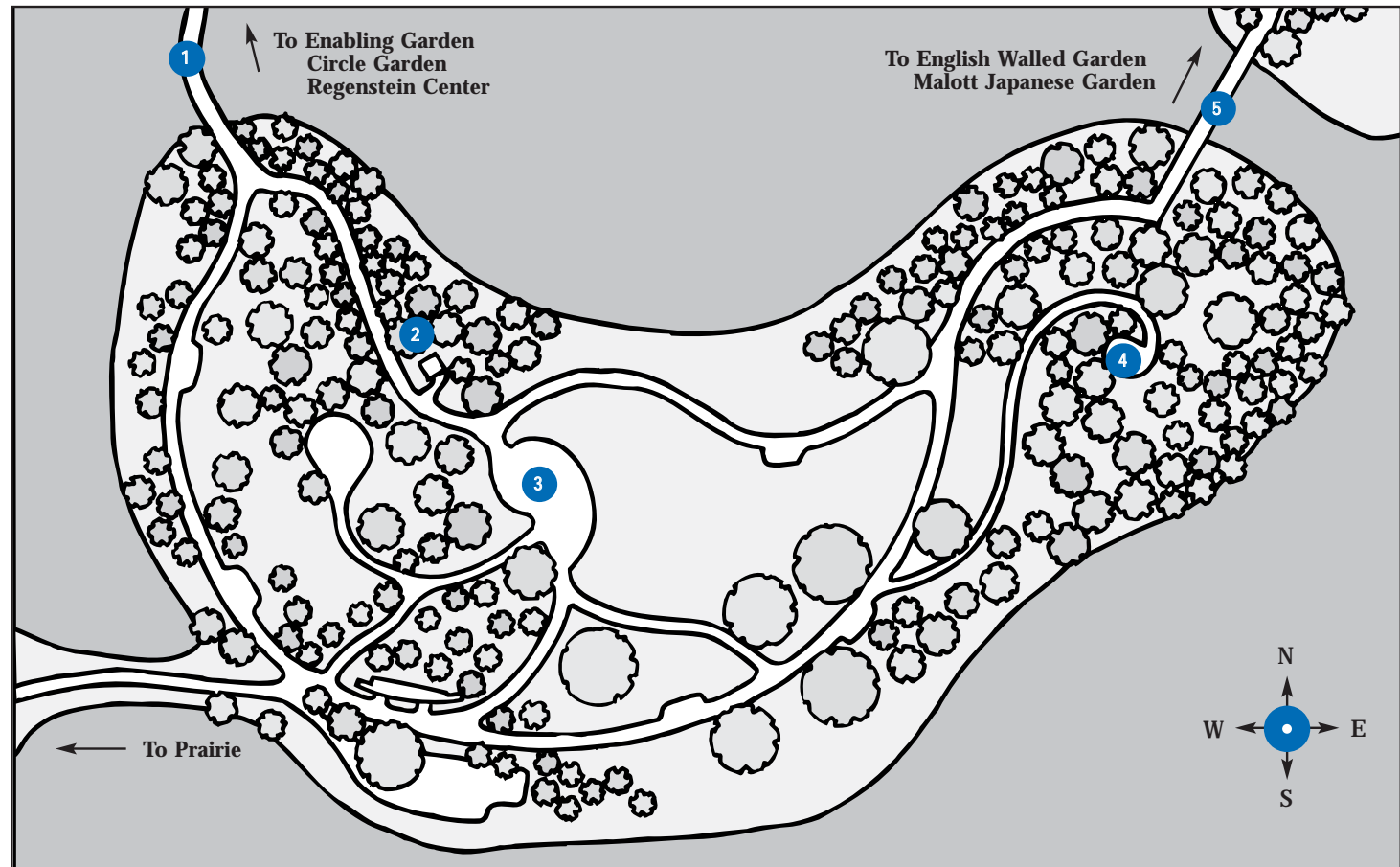
This ornamental grass features some of the best burgundy-red foliage available in grasses. In summer, the foliage is topped by airy reddish-pink flowers. Red switch grass fades to beige in the fall, and its tall, narrow shape adds interest to the garden in winter.

Moor Grass (*Molinina caerulea* Moorflame)

This upright green-leaved grass grows between 2.5 and 3.5 feet tall. It develops orange-red hues in the fall with deeper notes of purple. 'Moorflame' grows best in moist and sunny environments but can also adapt to a wide range of conditions.

Wild Oats (*Chasmanthium latifolium*)

This upright, clump-forming grass provides excellent contrast and texture almost year-round. Flat seed heads, which emerge bright green in summer and turn purplish bronze by fall, hang like ornaments from arching stems and flutter in the slightest breeze.



GARDEN FEATURES

1 The Serpentine

This gracefully curved bridge rests low, near the water, to provide an entirely new view of the Great Basin.

2 Carillon

Cast in Holland by master craftsmen, the Theodore C. Butz Memorial Carillon is one of the few hand-played carillons in the United States. It features 48 bronze bells fixed to a metal frame that are struck by clappers controlled by a playing device. Since its dedication in 1986, this carillon has been played by musicians from around the world at concerts here each summer.

3 The Nautilus

This spiral-shaped stone terrace is the heart of Evening Island. It is a place to gather and enjoy garden and lake views. Like a nautilus shell, its curved lines radiate out from the center and are echoed in surrounding pathways and hillsides. At the lawn in this area, special programs and performing arts events take place during the warmer months.

4 Council Ring

A circular stone seating area provides a quiet place to stop and take in the serenity of the garden. A signature element of influential landscape architect Jens Jensen, a council ring is intended to suggest strength and promote friendship.

5 The Arch

This elegant 120-foot bridge provides a spectacular view of Evening Island, the Great Basin and surrounding gardens. Constructed of cedar and steel, it is designed to be almost transparent in the landscape.

TO LEARN MORE

Darke, Rick. *The Encyclopedia of Grasses for Livable Landscapes*. Portland, Or.: Timber Press, 2007.

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CHICAGO BOTANIC GARDEN



Discover a garden inspired by the easy grandeur of the prairie.

A place where curving paths invite you to enjoy expansive views of gardens and shorelines.

A place to see the Chicago Botanic Garden from different perspectives.

EVENING ISLAND

Dedicated in 2002, five-acre Evening Island is the second largest of the Chicago Botanic Garden's nine islands. At its inception, Evening Island was imagined as a tranquil place in a quiet garden just before sunset. It evokes that sensory experience with curving paths, fields of flowers and grasses, and restful places to pause and enjoy breathtaking views.

The New American Garden

"Its point of reference is the American meadow—a place of freedom and ease, where plant life and human life coexist in harmony."—James van Sweden

Evening Island is an important example of the New American Garden style of landscape design. Pioneered by preeminent landscape architects James van Sweden and Wolfgang Oehme, the New American Garden style is characterized by vast sweeps of relatively few plant species layered in a bold, painterly fashion.

In New American Garden-style gardens, plants and architectural features appeal to the senses while staying true to a natural aesthetic. Low-maintenance grasses and perennial flowers are combined in often surprising ways to form living collages of color, texture and movement. Trees and shrubs grow naturally—pruned just enough to enhance their sculptural beauty. Seasonal change is embraced and celebrated through the selection and placement of plants that provide drama throughout the year.

The Designers

Since 1977, Oehme, van Sweden and Associates have designed landscapes for municipal parks, public gardens and private residences. Their projects include Nelson A. Rockefeller Park in New York City, the Francis Scott Key Memorial in Georgetown and the landscape design plan for the World War II memorial in Washington, D.C.

DESIGN HIGHLIGHTS

Here is a selection of the design techniques that Oehme, van Sweden and Associates used on Evening Island. With some modifications, they can be applied to a home landscape.

- The naturalistic style of Evening Island creates a visual bridge between the more formal gardens to the north and the wilder Prairie to the south.
- Surrounding views of the lakes, gardens and Prairie were “borrowed” by framing them with plantings and incorporating them into the design of Evening Island.
- Relatively few plant species are used in this garden—giving it a bold yet simple design.
- The garden features masses of perennials, grasses, trees and shrubs that dramatically change from season to season.
- The full color range of each plant was considered before choosing it for the garden—from its flower to its leaves and stems to its dried seed heads.
- Plants with contrasting leaf sizes were combined to help accentuate the drama of the garden.
- Hills and trees are used to control the view. Less-than-scenic views of the highway and other built features are intentionally hidden while grand views of the lakes and gardens are revealed.
- The whole garden is never shown at once. In some areas, views are obscured by plantings so that other views are all the more spectacular.
- The curved walls of the garden's central terrace, the Nautilus, echo the graceful curves of the garden's walks and shorelines.
- The hillsides provide a very different experience than the lower areas. The hillsides are shady, breezy and more wooded while the lower areas are sunny and open.

PLANTS

The key to the bold, natural look of Evening Island lies in the mass plantings of relatively few plant species. Here is a list of some hardy favorites that provide four-season interest. Most plants in the garden have identification labels.

Trees

Katsura Tree (*Cercidiphyllum japonicum*)

The glossy, heart-shaped leaves of this tree are purplish-pink in spring, blue-green in summer and yellow-orange in fall. In older trees, the bark shreds along the trunk and main branches, giving a shaggy appearance.

Korean Mountainash (*Sorbus alnifolia*)

This tree bears white blossoms in spring and displays vivid orange fall foliage with scarlet berries. Its smooth, gray bark brings elegant form to the winter garden.

Lacebark Pine (*Pinus bungeana*)

A slow-growing evergreen, this pine has remarkable exfoliating bark, which peels away in flakes to create a mottled patchwork of olive, gray and purple.

New Horizon Elm (*Ulmus* 'New Horizon')

This new elm hybrid offers resistance to Dutch elm disease and tolerance of harsh growing conditions. With its large, dark green leaves and cool gray bark, it makes a shady canopy on hot summer days.

Prairifire Crabapple (*Malus* 'Prairifire')

'Prairifire' has dark pink flowers in spring and small maroon fruits that last from fall into winter. Leaves emerge red in spring and mature to a bronze-green.

Weeping Golden Willow (*Salix alba* 'Tristis')

A signature plant of the Chicago Botanic Garden, this willow can be seen gracing the banks and borders of waterways. Its golden branches shimmer with leaves that are bright green on top and silvery green underneath.