

Winterthur Library

An Introduction to Resources



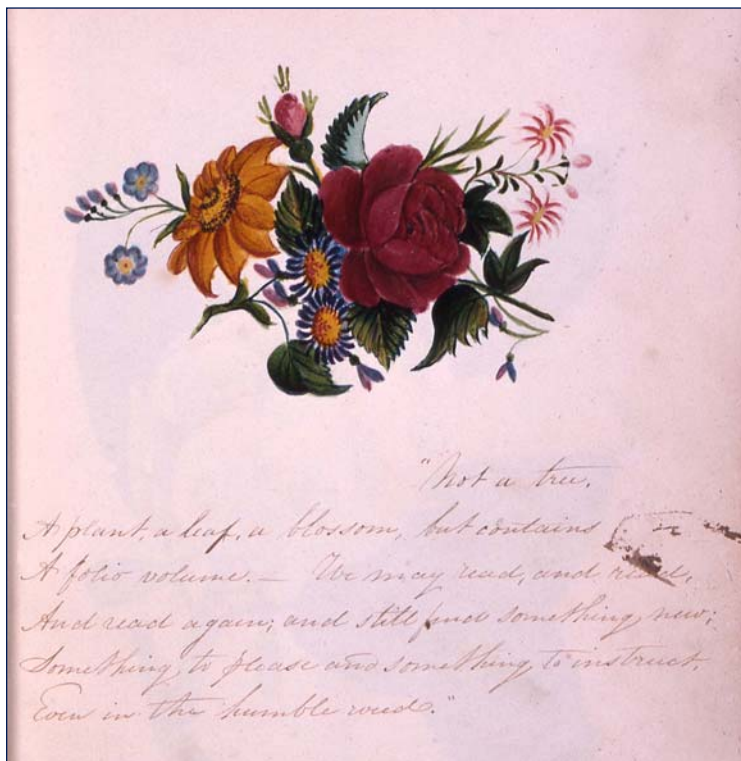
Botanical Illustrations

More than fifty years of collecting have allowed Winterthur Library's staff to assemble hundreds of books and manuscripts and thousands of ephemeral items containing floral images, dating from the late seventeenth to the early twentieth century. Among them are fine examples of engraving, chromolithography and photolithography. The images range from the scientific to the decorative, the artists from well known to amateur.

Scientific Illustrations

Among the early illustrated botanicals in the collection, those with a scientific base include William Barton, *A Flora of North America* (1821–23) and *Vegetable Materia Medica* (1817); John Hill, *The Family Herbal* (1812); and Jacob Bigelow, *American Medical Botany* (1817–20)—

the first American book to be published with the plates printed in color. The collection includes the two works that are considered the most visually spectacular scientific illustrations: Mark Catesby in *Natural History of Carolina, Florida...* (1731–43) produced large-scale hand-colored engravings from his own drawings. His use of posing birds against a background was botanically correct,



Mary Eliza Bachman, "The Friendly Repository and Keepsake of Mary Eliza Bachman," 1831–39. Downs Collection, Winterthur Library.



Jacob Bigelow, *American Medical Botany* (Boston: Cummings and Hilliard, 1817–20). Printed Book Collection, Winterthur Library.

anticipating John James Audubon's technique by almost a century. Robert Thornton in *The New Illustration of the Sexual System of Carolus von Linnaeus...*, known as *The Temple of Flora* (1808), aimed to set plants in suitable natural settings. The magnificent result was a work of art as well as a tribute to the scientific work of Linnaeus.

An early periodical in the collection, *Floral Magazine and Botanical Repository*, produced by nursery- and seedsmen D. and C. Landreth of Philadelphia in 1830, has hand-colored flower lithographs of excellent quality. Curtis's *Botanical Magazine; or, Flower-Garden Displayed*, covering the years 1787 to 1815, contains thousands of engravings.

Many books with botanicals were produced for artists, as they combined scientific accuracy with information on color and technique. Among the many drawing books in Winterthur's collection are Patrick Syme, *Practical Directions for Learning Flower-Drawing: A Series of Progressive Lessons* (1810)—the first book of art instruction published in the United States to deal with flower painting as a separate genre—George Brookshaw, *A New Treatise on Flower Painting* (1818); Augustin Heckel, *The Florist* (1759); and James Andrews, *Lessons in Flower Painting* (1835).

Florilegia

Portraits of flowers that emphasize their beauty over botany are referred to as florilegia. The text is often minimal or nonexistent except for brief identification. Among the library's holdings in this genre are Robert Furber, *The Flower Garden Display'd...* (1732), a smaller version of his earlier *Twelve Months of Flowers*, and *La Botanique de J. J. Rousseau, Ornée Soixante-cinq Planches, Imprimées en Couleurs d'après les Peintures de P. J. Redouté* (1805).

Manuscripts include a collection of sixty-six Chinese botanical watercolors produced in Canton for export between 1790 and 1860. Produced by a variety of artists, the paintings combine beautiful renderings with scientific accuracy.

Lithographic Works

The advent of lithography in the early nineteenth century brought about a surge in the production of botanical books aimed at both scientific and popular audiences. *Victoria Regia* (1854), the work of America's first chromolithographic printer, J. F. Allen, exemplifies the fascination with newly discovered exotic plants and the artistic possibilities of the new printing medium. Other lithographic works include Isaac Sprague, *Flowers of the Field and Forest* (1883); Susie Barstow Skelding, *Flowers*



Augustin Heckel, *The Florist* (London: J. Bowles and Son, 1759). Printed Book Collection, Winterthur Library.



J. F. Allen, *Victoria Regia* (Boston: Dutton and Wenworth, 1854). Printed Book Collection, Winterthur Library.

from *Sunlight and Shade* (1885); and Sophina Gordon, *Flowers, Earth's Silent Voices* (1865). Winterthur's manuscript copy of Louis Prang's *Native Flowers and Ferns* includes the color separations for printing.

Language of Flowers

While flower painting frequently had a symbolic component, in the second half of the nineteenth century this aspect gained preeminence with the mass publication of sentimental works that combined poetry with flower painting. Typical of the volumes are Susan C. Carter, *Lexicon of Ladies' Names with Their Floral Emblems* (1852); Emma Embury, *Language of Flora* (1854); Mrs. C. M. Badger, *Floral Belles* (1867); the enormously popular *Language of Flowers* (1884) by Kate Greenaway; and, as the genre's popularity was waning, Walter Crane's *Flora's Feast* (1895).

Also popular during this time were albums, assembled primarily by young women, that combined sentimental poetry with flower sketches, illustrations from books and magazines, and brightly colored cards. Among those at Winterthur is "The Friendly Repository and Keepsake of Mary Eliza Bachman," which dates from 1831 to 1839. Bachman was married to a son of John James

Audubon, and the album contains sketches by several Audubon associates.

Other Resources

Floral images abound in the thousands of greeting cards, postcards, valentines, and other paper ephemera in the manuscript collection. The collection of books on garden and landscape design could also be consulted. Of particular note is Henry Francis du Pont's personal collection of four hundred garden books.



Winterthur Library is located in the Crowninshield Research Building, accessible from the main entrance to Winterthur Museum & Country Estate.

Hours: Monday–Friday, 8:30 am–4:30 pm

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