

# F O C U S E online

NCSU LIBRARIES

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PEYTON WILLIAMS

Learn more about the [NCSU Libraries' Capital Campaign](#) by reading this issue's "Development" section. Here, Vice Provost and Director of Libraries Susan K. Nutter and NC State Basketball Coach Herb Sendek promote the Libraries' "Buy a Brick" opportunity. Each brick can be engraved in honor of friends or family and supports improvements in the D. H. Hill Library.

Photographs by Becky Kirkland and Daniel Kim, NCSU, unless otherwise noted.

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## The Beauty of Vegetables

BY ANNA DAHLSTEIN, EXTERNAL RELATIONS

*Harvest, 1979. Sondra Freckelton watercolor and pencil on paper, Smithsonian American Art Museum, gift of Sara Roby Foundation.*

*"When I first started gardening, I grew vegetables simply to have the greens of the onions and the multi-hued outer leaves of the cabbage—subject matter for my watercolors. Painting Harvest, I was unaware of how much I had learned from the garden, but soon realized that the making of the garden had very much to do with the making of art. The garden taught me the . . . relationship of similar shape, form, and color to create directions and rhythms, the importance of scale, proportion, and placement in both endeavors. . . ."*

—Sondra Freckelton, 2001



The NCSU Libraries has gained statewide acclaim for providing quality programming on historical and cultural topics of great interest to the public. An upcoming traveling exhibition from the Smithsonian will be of particular interest to avocational gardeners as well as students and faculty in the university's Department of Horticultural Science.

*Feast Your Eyes: The Unexpected Beauty of Vegetable Gardens* traces the visual appeal of vegetable gardens across centuries, continents, and cultures, from the floating gardens (chinampas) of the Aztecs and the highly manicured potagers of Louis XIV's Versailles, to the emergence of World War II victory gardens in America. The exhibition will run from February 4 through April 2, 2006, in the D. H. Hill Library, and then continue on a national tour through 2007. As always, it will be free and open to the public.

Centuries ago, vegetable gardens were designed to be both productive and pleasing to the eye. In the ensuing years, vegetable gardens were perceived as so unappealing that they had to be

banished from the formal landscape. Today, vegetable gardens are making a startling comeback, seen as a source of not only food but also beauty.

"Children and some presidents may hate them, but vegetables and the gardens in which they grow have a fascinating history," said Susan J. Pennington, exhibition curator and former Enid A. Haupt Fellow in Horticulture at the Smithsonian. "Through time, artists and gardeners have both scorned and admired the appearance of vegetables; while at the same time, exotic vegetables, often considered inedible, took pride of place in flower beds. All these ups and downs in popularity make for an entertaining story and a chance to examine some of the great gardens in history."

*Feast Your Eyes* brings together images from the Smithsonian Institution's Archives of American Gardens as well as images and documents from other museums and repositories to chart the history of vegetables excluded from ornamental gardens and their surprising comeback during the past twenty years. The exhibit con-



**Chinampas at Xochimilco, Mexico, 1920s–1930s.**  
*Hand-colored glass lantern slide, Edward Van Altena, photographer, Smithsonian Institution Horticulture, Archives of American Gardens, Garden Club of America Collection.*

*Most of the Aztec chinampas have long since fallen into disuse, buried by the urban sprawl of Mexico City. However, the town of Xochimilco (“where the flowers grow”) has preserved its chinampas system. Visitors can still take boat rides along the canals and see the gardens awash in flowers and vegetables.*

cludes with “vegettes,” whimsical tales of vegetables now popular in public and private gardens.

*Feast Your Eyes: The Unexpected Beauty of Vegetable Gardens* was developed by the Smith-

sonian Institution Horticulture Services Division in collaboration with the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Services (SITES). ❖

**Monticello’s Vegetable Garden, Charlottesville, Virginia, 1984.**

*Eleanor C. Weller, photographer, Smithsonian Institution Horticulture, Archives of American Gardens, Garden Club of America Collection.*

*Thomas Jefferson grew more than 250 vegetable varieties in his terraced twenty-four-bed vegetable garden. An early champion of the tomato, he constantly tried new varieties of vegetables, keeping detailed notes about planting, sprouting, and harvesting times.*





*Focus*, a newsletter published three times a year, seeks to promote the services, activities, needs, and interests of the NCSU Libraries to the university, the Friends of the Library, and beyond.

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NCSU Libraries Homepage: <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/>