

# BURGWIN-WRIGHT HOUSE & GARDENS



## Self-Guided Garden Tour

The Gardens of the Burgwin-Wright House are part of the original lot where John Burgwin, a prominent merchant, planter, and treasurer of the Colony, built his residence in 1770-71. The gardens have been restored with plants, shrubs and trees commonly used during the 18th century. Their design was influenced by European styles brought to America by colonists in the 1600s and 1700s. The majority of plantings and features in the gardens are funded by generous donations, memorials and allowances by the National Society of the Colonial Dames of America in the State of North Carolina (NSCDA-NC).

The house and gardens sit on two-thirds of an acre along Market Street, the center of colonial Wilmington where both the food and slave markets were located.

The ballast stone foundations of the house are in fact the remnants of Wilmington's first city jail built in 1744. Due to this unique feature, the gardens have been used for various purposes over the centuries coinciding with the development of Wilmington as the most prominent port in North Carolina.

Looking north towards Market Street from the front steps of the house, notice the two southern magnolias planted in beds of English ivy at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Prior to that time, homeowners limited planting trees in order to maximize the penetration of natural light and breeze off the river. Part of the original colonial wood fence is located under the front porch on the western side of the house. The iron Victorian fence surrounding the front garden was mounted in the mid-nineteenth century.

### .....ORCHARD.....

The steps to the west take you into the Orchard. Originally the jail yard, this space along with the lot beside it once housed the gallows, whipping posts, and stocks. Later, as part of the Burgwin residence, it served as the formal garden until the late nineteenth century when it was sold for commercial use. At first it housed two small shops, but was converted to a used-car lot in the 1940s.



The NSCDA-NC acquired the property and reunited it with the house in 1966 at which time the Orchard was restored. An orchard was a vital part of the household where fruits were grown for the residents to enjoy. Trees planted in this orchard include figs and pomegranates. Free form wax myrtles, whose berries were used to make fragrant bayberry candles, line the fence along Market Street. Centering the orchard is an armillary sundial that records the movement of the sun. Note the espaliered crabapple trees trained against the wall as you make your way up the terrace stairs.

### .....TERRACES.....

At the rear of the Orchard, steps ascend to a series of Terraced Gardens. You are now entering the domestic working area of the property. The first terrace has access to the back alley and served as the primary service entrance to the kitchen and inner court yard. The second terrace is where the slave-quarters and 'necessary' (outhouse) were located. The necessary was made of



brick while the slave quarters resembled a long wood shack. The slave-quarters predated the 1850s, and were lost to a fire in 1949. The terraces themselves were originally made from ballast stones brought to the area in the 18th century. Note the pecan tree and allée of Italian cypresses.

### .....DIPPING POOL.....

At the top of the stairs in the far back west corner of the garden is the Dipping Pool Garden. The pool is a new construction but historically this type of structure was used to catch and store rainwater to irrigate the gardens and water the livestock. A two-story brick carriage house was once located along the southern wall of the property with its doors and windows facing the parking lot that served as the courtyard to saddle the horses and ready the carriage. It is likely the slave grooms, whose duties were to oversee the horses and drive the carriage, slept on the second story. The carriage house was lost in the early 1950s due to disrepair and a hurricane. The location of the driveway is original.



### .....PARTERRE GARDEN.....

Off the driveway, the Parterre Garden is an ornamental garden consisting of planting beds, typically in symmetrical patterns, separated and connected by pathways and edged in tightly clipped hedging close to the ground. Note that behind the garden, the neighboring property, the DuBois-Boatwright House, is also colonial.

### ...PHYSIC GARDEN & WELL...

Past the Parterre Garden, the original well has since been filled in. In the colonial era, prior to the constructions of drainage tunnels, the property was fortunate to have a spring run through it. Along the wall of the house (1845 addition), a Physic Garden grows in a raised bed to temper the soil and control the growth. Many colonial household would have had an herb bed for medicinal purposes consisting of, but not limited to, chamomile, sage, feverfew, foxglove, mint, savory, tansy, valerian, and roses.



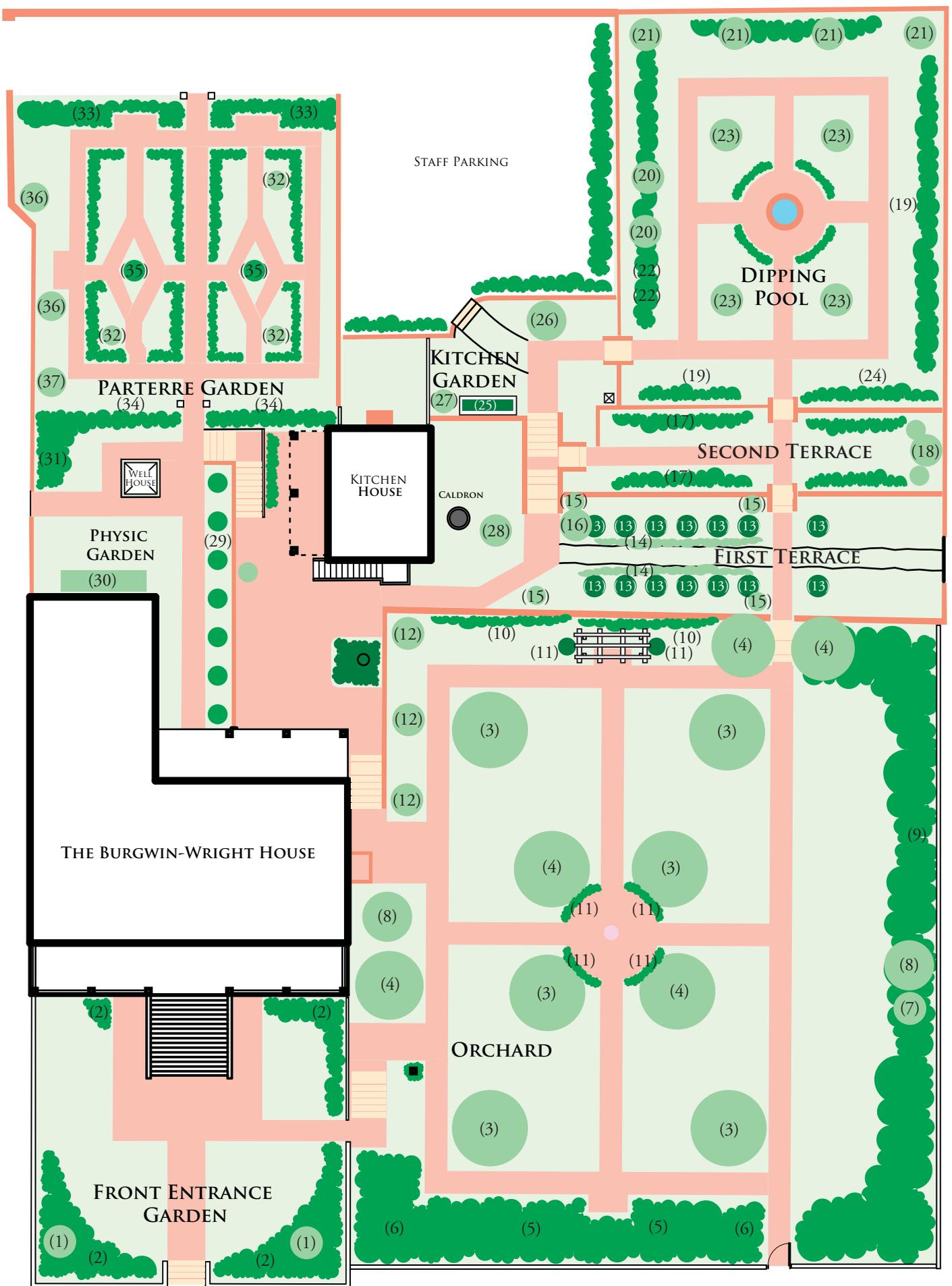
### .....KITCHEN.....

Down the steps was the working heart of the house- the courtyard and kitchen. Traditionally, the inner-courtyard was a working space where laundry, food preparation, and various other chores were done. Built in 1744 along with the city jail, the kitchen is also constructed out of ballast stones. In 1845, a brick addition was constructed above the kitchen to serve as the law office of Joshua Grainger Wright. During this time, the kitchen was moved indoors. The brick addition was replaced in 1955 with the white wood structure you see today. The two existing arches (note the outline of a third that has since collapse and been filled in) were the outer cells of the city jail where prisoners who committed minor offenses were kept.



*Where now meets then*

224 Market Street • Wilmington NC 28401  
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(910) 762-0570



**FRONT ENTRANCE GARDEN**

- (1) Magnolia Grandiflora
- (2) English Ivy

**ORCHARD**

- (3) Fig Tree
- (4) Pomegranate
- (5) Wax Leaf Myrtle
- (6) Gerbing and George Taber Azaleas
- (7) Holly Tree
- (8) Vitex
- (9) Nikos Hydrangea
- (10) Espaliered Crabapple
- (11) English Boxwood
- (12) Camellia

**FIRST TERRACE**

- (13) Italian Cypress Allée
- (14) Lenten Rose
- (15) Red Berry Nandina
- (16) Pecan Tree

**SECOND TERRACE**

- (17) Holly Fern
- (18) Water Oak

**DIPPING POOL**

- (19) Roses featuring 18th century tea roses
- (20) Keiffer Pear Tree
- (21) American Holly Tree
- (22) Daphne
- (23) Yaupon Holly
- (24) Rose of Sharon

**KITCHEN GARDEN**

- (25) Raised Herb Bed
- (26) Pecan Tree
- (27) Purple Poplar Tree
- (28) Golden Rain Tree

**PHYSIC GARDEN**

- (29) English Boxwood
- (30) Medicinal Herbs

**PARTERRE GARDEN**

- (31) Yaupon Hedge
- (32) Dogwood Tree
- (33) Cherry Laurel Hedge
- (34) Flame Azalea Hedge
- (35) Cypress Topiary
- (36) Yaupon Holly
- (37) Crepe Myrtle

*Two of Colonial Williamsburg's renowned landscape architects, Alden Hopkins and Donald Parker, designed the colonial-style gardens and supervised their installation – a process that began in 1962 and was completed in 1970.*



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*The gardens are available for private events and portrait photography.*