

Bartram Broadside



Published by the John Bartram Association for the 'noble & curious friends' of Historic Bartram's Garden, Philadelphia

Preface

In this, the year of the William Penn 350th Anniversary Project celebrating Penn's birth and his legacy, the John Bartram Association invited Harris Eckstut, a member of the committee for the event, to speak at the Association's Annual Meeting on April 29. For those who heard and were moved by his presentation and for our readers who could not attend, the full text is reprinted below.

We are also pleased to include in this issue of the Broadside the result of new research by Joel T. Fry into the introduction of the Poinsettia to America at Bartram's Garden.

We felt these pieces to be particularly appropriate as the holiday season approaches, and hope you enjoy them as we did. Best wishes for a joyous holiday to all the friends of Historic Bartram's Garden.

Martha Leigh Wolf, Executive Director

Quaker Leadings

Harris Eckstut

Let us pause for a few moments, reflect inward into ourselves while sensing what is around us.

You have just experienced a taste of a Quaker meeting for worship—a meeting for worship similar to that which William Penn, John Bartram, Lucretia Mott and present-day Quakers have experienced for the past 350 years.

As I pondered what to say today, I realized that in a way I didn't have to speak. It is this silence we experience which speaks for itself.

What do I and others find in this period of silence, during which we do what we call "centering down?" I like to say it is the western way—or Tao Occidental—revealed. And from it I listen to, see, and feel the world that surrounds me. These still, reflective times, put me in contact with myself, transforming me and how I live in my world.

What is revealed moves us to seek a peace, a center, a satisfaction within our lives. This was and still is the spiritual seeking of Quakers. We grasp this Light within ourselves which will transform and lead each of us into the actions of our lives.

These spiritual leadings are acted upon in the context of the times and the cultures of each individual's life. William Penn lived during the religious and political turmoil of the 17th century Puritan Reformation and Restoration periods when kings were getting their heads chopped off and worshipping one's faith landed you in jail or meant torture or death. Based upon his spiritual leadings, William Penn used his experience, money, and court positions to try to make his visions of peace, toleration, and justice a reality for his world. This became his "holy experiment." His actions became the foundation not only of the colonies he touched during his lifetime, but also of the subsequent country whose constitution and independence is based on his framework of governance.

The 18th century Age of Enlightenment guided John Bartram's leading to recognize and catalogue the magnificent natural order that he found around him. In this age of acquiring knowledge from all sources, books as well as nature became essential to a person's understanding of the world. Through Franklin and others who were building new libraries, Bartram was able to obtain books that had never been seen or thought of by earlier Quakers. He read about a whole new world, including Confucius. He knew that Christ was not part of Far Eastern spiritual and religious thought. Between these readings and the wonderment with the order of nature around him, Bartram became what Quakers today call a theological Universalist. This led to what in the past few years has become a now infamous struggle among the members of Darby Meeting concerning the divinity of Christ. Fifty years later, these thoughts would lead to the bitter split between the Hicksites (the 19th century Quaker Universalists) and the Orthodox (a more traditional Christian Quaker group). Despite the fact that John Bartram was "read out" of Darby Meeting due to his beliefs, it should be noted that he was never prevented from worship among Friends—and that he was allowed to be buried at Darby Meeting.

Lucretia Mott lived in the 19th century during a time when the industrial revolution created and revealed the horror of slavery, as well as grave injustices toward women. Her conviction that there was that of God in all human beings led her to battle against these injustices with all her abilities and resources.

Today, in the twentieth century, Quakers are following their spiritual leadings in many directions: some are trying to save the environment; others are airlifting boots to Bosnia; still others are teaching in Palestine; and some are simply holding the hand of a young AIDS victim in the last few hours of his life.

The spiritual testimony of acting upon the leadings of the Light we find within ourselves, with the assistance and understanding of fellow Friends, is as relevant to us today as it was to William Penn and Friends of the 17th century. Since this guidance in our lives comes from within each and every individual, it is continuously changing into the relevancy of his or her life and times. Some become famous in their leadership



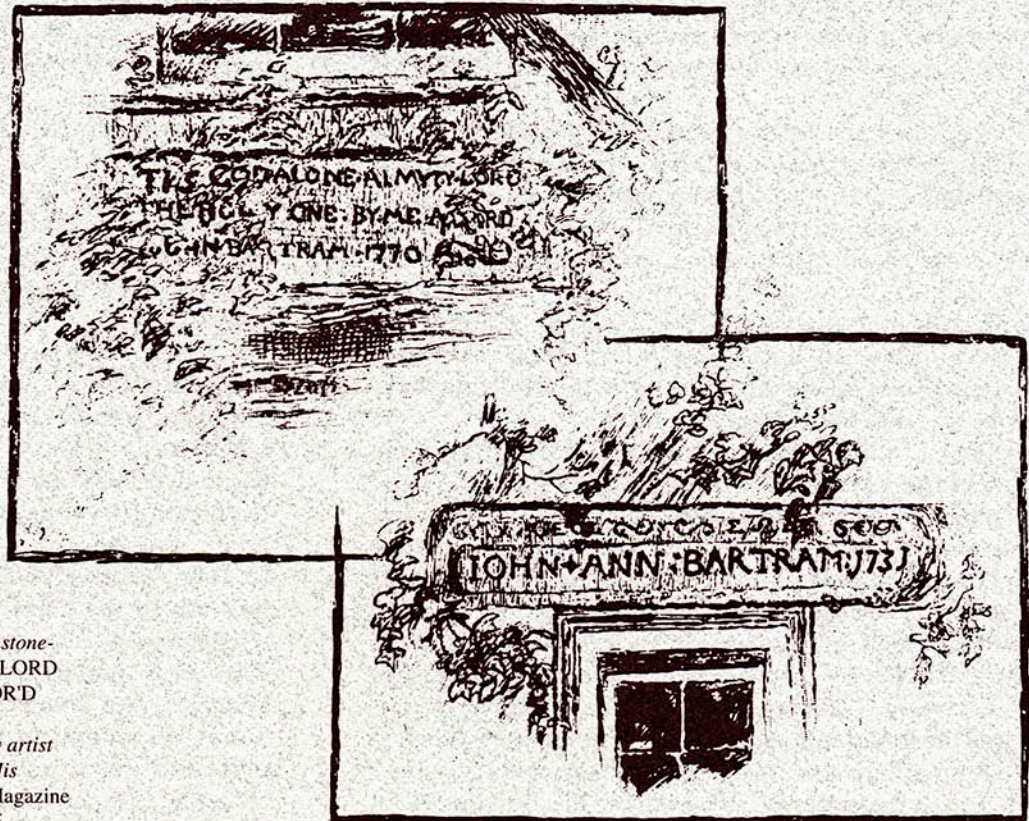
Quakerism has and will continue to have a changing face. The faith is a spiritual one based on the experience of sharing silence in worship and acting upon the ministry discovered within oneself.

like Lucretia Mott and Susan B. Anthony. Others, like those who worked with the survivors at the concentration camps of the Holocaust, or in the Japanese-American detention camps, or the AIDS helpers today, do so lovingly in anonymity.

Quakerism has and will continue to have a changing face. The faith is a spiritual one based on the experience of sharing silence in worship and acting upon the ministry discovered within oneself. This seeking of an inner truth is certainly not unique to Quakerism. It has been world-wide for centuries, probably millennia. In the Far East this inner light might be called the Buddha within or the Chi. In the West some Quakers call it the Christ within or that of God in everyone. In the Star Wars movies it is called the Force. I like to call it the Zen. Probably every individual who has sought and uncovered his or her light has a name for it or different feeling for what it is.

At my meeting (which for those of you unfamiliar with Quaker terms, is similar to a congregation), during the summer months we hold an early morning worship outdoors. For an hour we sit together in silence and share and listen to the not-so-quiet sounds of nature. When we are moved to share a spiritual insight with one another, we speak out of the silence. Unlike our indoor worship, however, there is usually little if any oral ministry. Rather, on these days nature seems to minister to us — just as she did to Bartram and other early botanists.

As we walk through the quiet of this Garden and look up at the oil refineries surrounding us, let us look within ourselves to hear what nature is telling us; and may that lead each of us into tomorrow's work.



John Bartram's belief preserved in stone—
IT IS GOD ALONE ALMYTY LORD
THE HOLY ONE BY ME ADOR'D
JOHN BARTRAM 1770

Illustration by the Delaware Valley artist
Howard Pyle from "Bartram and His
Garden," Harper's New Monthly Magazine
vol. 60, no. 357 (Feb. 1880), p. 325.

The Poinsettia was introduced to the gardening world from the Bartram Garden in 1829. Documents indicate that this international symbol of winter cheer was first successfully grown outside its homeland at the Garden.

The Introduction of the Poinsettia at Bartram's Garden

Joel T. Fry

While the botanical discoveries and horticultural introductions of John Bartram and his son William Bartram are now generally recognized, the continuing role of the Bartram family in plant introduction in the early 19th century has been all but forgotten. It is a little known fact that the Poinsettia was introduced to the gardening world from the Bartram Botanic Garden in 1829. All the details of this introduction are yet to be uncovered. Even Poinsett, the plant's namesake, was surprisingly quiet about his role. Still, it is possible to reconstruct the introduction of the plant. Available documents indicate that this international symbol of winter cheer was first successfully grown outside its homeland at the Bartram Garden in Philadelphia.

Joel Roberts Poinsett (1778-1851), a native of Charleston, South Carolina, held various political, military, and diplomatic positions, but always continued a strong interest in the natural sciences and horticulture. Poinsett was first sent to Mexico in 1822, on secret diplomatic mission, and this resulted in his book *Notes on Mexico*, published in Philadelphia in 1824. When the Mexican Republic was recognized in 1824, Poinsett was offered the post of first U. S. Minister Plenipotentiary, and he resided in Mexico from 1825 to early 1830. While in Mexico Poinsett promoted political, business, and scientific contacts with the newly independent Mexican state. As part of his mission to expand cooperation between the two countries, Poinsett shipped plants and seeds between Mexico and the United States. Fortunately, many letters to Poinsett in Mexico survive in the collections of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

At present, there is evidence that four different collections of seeds and plants were sent from Mexico to the Bartram Botanic Garden in Philadelphia in the period 1828-1829. Poinsett was involved in some but not all of these transactions, and the Poinsettia could have been included in one or several of the shipments.

Poinsett was elected a member of the American Philosophical Society in early 1827, and his connections with the Philadelphia scientific

community and the Bartram Garden expanded after this date. Poinsett corresponded with Peter Du Ponceau, president of the Philosophical Society. William Maclure¹, the peripatetic President of the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia, wrote Poinsett often, and paid several visits to Mexico while Poinsett was minister. From January to early spring 1828, Maclure and Thomas Say² were in Mexico, at Vera Cruz and Mexico City. William Keating³, a geologist from the University of Pennsylvania, also traveled to Mexico in 1828 to prospect for American mining interests. He developed a close friendship with Poinsett. Not surprisingly, each of these men spent some time as intermediaries for seeds and plant material between Mexico and Bartram's Garden, then the botanic garden of Philadelphia.

In a letter to Robert Carr dated July 23, 1828, Thomas Say sent over a hundred varieties of Mexican seed "of my own collecting." Many were vegetables and fruits offered in the markets in Mexico, but trees, shrubs, and herbaceous plants from the wild were also included, notably several forms of cactus. Say's list was not well identified—some varieties were numbered without any names. It is possible that the Poinsettia was included in this collection, perhaps as No. 65 "Fine Red flower, perennial."

A letter from James Ronaldson⁴ of Philadelphia to Poinsett, November 6, 1828, may record another likely date and means for the introduction of the Poinsettia.

Sir,

Some time ago, I received a box of Seeds from Vera Cruz without advice, of to whom I was indebted for the compliment, but from circumstances and some marks on the paper that contained the seeds, I presume they were from you & Mr. Keating. In the box were some acorns preserved in earth, and seperated from the seed by a board which having slipped out of its place the earth and acorns had got amongst the seeds and put all into confusion! But this accident was not permitted to defeat the views of the donor, and to give the seeds a full chance of success, I called Col. Carr of Bartrams Gardens and he collected some of each kind, then Mr. Hibbert⁵, then Mr. Parker⁶ all professional Botanists, and each got some, the earth in which the seed had got mingled was taken by Mr. Carr to be sown and every thing given a chance of growing, and I know many of the seeds have grown and I am confident will by these gentlemen be taken care of.

...If the procuring of seeds and plants for Mexico from the U. S. is a desirable object, I would recommend commissioning them from Rob¹ Carr of Bartram's Gardens



Joel Roberts Poinsett (1778-1851), a native of Charleston, South Carolina, held various political, military, and diplomatic positions, but always continued a strong interest in the natural sciences and horticulture.

and it would be well to direct the letter 'Rob' Carr Bartrams Gardens, care of George Bartram, Esq. Phila^a. Mr. Carr understands the mode of packing plants and seeds, so as ensures them against the dangers of a voyage...

William Maclure had returned briefly to Philadelphia in the fall of 1828 bringing yet more Mexican seeds and plants with him. If the Poinsettia was introduced from live plants or cuttings, forwarded by Poinsett to the United States, this was the most likely route. Maclure left again for Mexico in early November. He carried Ronaldson's letter along with seeds from Carr, Ronaldson, and Parker, and plants from Hibbert, intended for Poinsett and the other Americans in Mexico. (A number of letters from Maclure to Poinsett record the difficulties in getting these seeds and nursery stock to their destination.) At the November 1828 meeting of the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society, Robert Carr exhibited *Lopezia Hirsuta*, the Mosquito Flower, a Mexican plant "presented to the proprietor by William Maclure, Esq., and now flowering for the first time..."

The paper trail of the Poinsettia next appears at "The first semi-annual Exhibition of fruits, flowers and plants, of the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society," held June 6, 1829. This was the first public show of the Horticultural Society, a tradition continued today as the Philadelphia Flower Show. One of the noteworthy exhibits was "A new *Euphorbia* with bright scarlet bractes or floral leaves, presented to the Bartram collection by Mr. Poinsett, United States Minister to Mexico." There can be no doubt that this was the Poinsettia, now known as *Euphorbia pulcherrima* or *Poinsettia pulcherrima*. It was shown in flower in June, not exactly in keeping with its current traditional role as a winter flower.

Poinsett's introductions of new plants to the Bartram collection did not end with the Poinsettia. December 17, 1829, *The National Gazette* of Philadelphia recorded:

Col. Carr, proprietor of the Bartram Botanic Garden, near Philadelphia, has just received, through the agency of Mr. James Ronaldson, a valuable collection of plants of the south, transmitted from Mexico by the Hon. Mr. Poinsett and our worthy townsman Professor Keating. This collection embraces fifty species of the *Cactus*, a genus distinguished in all its varieties from every other tribe by the most striking and interesting characteristics. Col. Carr having made his selections of a plant of each species, in accordance with the request of the donors, the

residue will be sent to some other botanic establishment.

This was the largest collection of cactus then in the United States, and at least through 1837 was housed in a separate Cactus House, one of ten greenhouses at the Bartram Garden.

Through the early 1830s, the Poinsettia remained rare in cultivation and, when documented, was associated with the Bartram collection. March 21, 1830, an old friend from Columbia, South Carolina, wrote Poinsett in Washington, newly returned from Mexico:

...Mrs. Herbemont...has nevertheless been several times very vexed with you, & that was when she learned by the papers that several northern gardeners (these gentlemen impart nothing to us southerners) had received seeds & plants you had sent them from that land of vegetable beauties, Mexico, & that you had not in one instance remembered her...

In July 1830, the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society appointed a committee "For visiting the Nurseries and Gardens in the vicinity of Philadelphia." The report of this committee was published in several Philadelphia magazines and newspapers and detailed the finest public and private gardens in the area. At the "Bartram Botanic Garden and Nursery, Robert Carr, Proprietor" the committee noticed "Some beautiful species of tropical productions...such as the *Euphorbia heterophylla*, with its large scarlet flowers," as well as "...some curious species of Cactus, lately received from Mexico. These last are astonishing productions, and new to us." The report of the Committee was prepared from notes taken by "an able gardiner, Mr. Buist"⁷ who will soon appear again in this history of the Poinsettia.

By early 1832, the Poinsettia was still not available in New York. William Prince⁸ of Flushing, covetous of the new plant, wrote Poinsett in January:

...we have not the *Euphorbia punicea* & all our efforts to obtain it from Europe have failed—Mr. Carr of Philad^a has it, but there is such jealousy existing with him towards our establishment that he would not probably sell it were we to solicit it—As you of course have control & influence in the case—we should feel pleased if you w^d adopt such course as would cause us to receive a plant, but it should not be sent us until the weather rendered it safe, as the cold w^d destroy it—The collection of Cactus & other plants sent by yourself & a Philad^a Gent^m to be divided between Mr. Carr & myself were almost wholly lost for after selecting such as he chose, Mr. Carr sent the rest on to us in freezing weather & they were mostly hard frozen on arrival &

Poinsett resided in Mexico from 1825 to early 1830. As part of his mission to expand cooperation between the two countries, Poinsett shipped plants and seeds between Mexico and the United States.

perished in consequence...

Poinsett had sent Mexican seeds and plants (but apparently not the Poinsettia) to Prince at his Linnaean Botanic Garden in 1827; in return Prince had shipped red clover and garden seeds to Poinsett, July 2, 1827, as part of a larger order for Mexico.

In the summer of 1833, the botanist Constantine Rafinesque published the first scientific description of the Poinsettia for his *Atlantic Journal*. Rafinesque recorded the brief history of the plant in Philadelphia to date:

The Botanical Garden of Bartram received some years ago from Mr. Poinsett our ambassador in Mexico, a fine new green-house shrub, akin to *Euphorbia*, with splendid scarlet blossoms, or rather bracts. It has since been spread in our gardens near Philadelphia, and is known in some as the *Euphorbia Poinsetti*; but appears to me to form a peculiar genus or S. G. at least...

Rafinesque coined a new name, *Pleuradena Coccinea*, for the Poinsettia, although he allowed it might yet be considered a *Euphorbia*. Rafinesque did note that the plant "blossoms very early in Spring."

In the fall of 1834, Robert Buist traveled to Edinburgh, Scotland, and took plants or cuttings of the Poinsettia for introduction. It was given to James Macnab of the Botanic Garden at Edinburgh, and several other gardens. The Poinsettia flowered in Edinburgh in the spring of 1835, but imperfectly. In 1836, it was drawn for *Curtis's Botanical Magazine*. The Poinsettia was redescribed for the European botanic and gardening world in an article prepared by Robert C. Graham, Regius Professor of Botany at Edinburgh, for both *Curtis's* and the *Edinburgh New Philosophical Journal*. Unfortunately for history, Graham relied on Buist's own incorrect account of the introduction of the plant, and there was no mention of the Carrs or Bartram's Garden. Graham was also unaware of Rafinesque's description of the genus in 1833 and he proceeded to rename the plant. Graham, with the collaboration of Sir William J. Hooker, based his name on an earlier specimen of the plant found in the Willdenow herbarium⁹. It had been named *Euphorbia pulcherrima*, but never published. Graham placed the plant in a new genus





On exhibit at the first public show of the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society, June 6, 1829, was "A new *Euphorbia*..., presented to the Bartram collection by Mr. Poinsett, United States Minister to Mexico."

Poinsettia pulcherrima,

I have dedicated it, if not to its original discoverer, at least to one who has first brought it into cultivation, and into general notice among Botanists, and from whose exertions many additions to the plants in cultivation from Mexico are expected.

Buist himself wrote Poinsett in December 1835 hoping to get contacts for Mexican cacti and orchids and with an account of the interest of the new plant in Europe:

The *Euphorbia Poinsettia** is at this very moment producing a great excitement in Scotland & Eng^ld. they flowered it at the Royal Botanic Garden of Edin^g last winter. I informed the Regius Professor that it was introduced by you to this Country in 1828 while you was Minister Plenipotentiary from the United States to the Republic of Mexico. In our collection last winter the beautiful Scarlet bractea on a plant 4 months from a cutting was 14 inches diameter & on a plant 1 year old 23 inches diam. in fact it is a blaze of beauty & is invaluable & more so when it displays its gorgeous colour in our Solitary winter months (from Nov^r to April) but requires a great heat to flower it well...

*The plant introduced by you was Sold under the name of *E. hetrophylla*, but in a personal conversation with Prof. Hooker of Glasgow in 1831 & from my own observations in winter 31/32 I discovered that it was a new plant & honoured it with the name of its distinguished introducer which it is now known under in Europe & America & hope it will retain through all the visisitudes of nomenclature.

It has long been the story that Poinsett personally introduced the *Poinsettia* first to Charleston, bringing the plant on his return from Mexico, and from there it was discovered or sent to the Carrs in Philadelphia. This seems impossible for the *Poinsettia* was shown to the Philadelphia public in June of 1829, over six months before Poinsett returned from Mexico. All available evidence suggests that the *Poinsettia* was first sent to the Bartram Garden in Philadelphia in the fall of 1828. After the new scarlet *Euphorbia* was introduced to the public in 1829, the plant was widely propagated, and became a popular mainstay of the Philadelphia florist trade. It was initially grown for late winter or even early spring color in the greenhouse, and only through experience was it possible to flower the plant for the winter holidays. The young gardener, Robert Buist, returned to Europe in 1831 and found the scarlet flower unknown. He brought the new plant to Edinburgh on a second trip in the fall of 1834, and has undeservedly received the major credit

for its introduction since.

Notes

¹William Maclure (1763-1840) born in Ayr, Scotland, used his manufacturing fortune as a patron of the sciences and education. Maclure was an early member of the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia, and served as its president from 1817-1840. Radical in many of his beliefs, Maclure joined the social experiment of Robert Owen at New Harmony, Indiana in 1825 and took Thomas Say and many of the most active members of the Philadelphia natural history scene with him, effectively crippling the Academy of Natural Sciences.

²Thomas Say (1787-1834) was born into a Philadelphia Quaker family with strong personal and family ties to the Bartram Garden. Say's mother, Ann Bonsall Say was a granddaughter of John Bartram. His father, Dr. Benjamin Say, had helped organize the Society of Free Quakers during the Revolution with Moses Bartram and others, and John Bartram, Jr. and James Bartram also joined this meeting. Thomas Say followed his great uncle William Bartram's lead as a naturalist and explorer, and specialized in entomology and conchology. Say was one of the founding members of the Academy of Natural Sciences, and he traveled on both Long Expeditions. Say spent most of the last decade of his life at the Owenite community of New Harmony, Indiana.

³William Hypolitus Keating (1799-1840) was born in Wilmington, Delaware. Raised in Philadelphia, Keating studied chemistry at the University of Pennsylvania and became Professor of Mineralogy and Chemistry at the University from 1822-1828. He resigned his post in 1828 to go to Mexico and supervise American interests in several silver mines. Returning to Philadelphia in 1830 Keating took up politics, and became Professor of Chemistry, and one of managers of the Franklin Institute.

⁴James Ronaldson (1769-1841) was a Scots-born baker, who with Archibald Binny in 1796 began a very successful business as typefounders. Robert Carr used type faces from Binny and Ronaldson in printing *American Ornithology*. After Binny's retirement in 1815, the firm continued as the "Letter Foundry of James Ronaldson," and Ronaldson invested in a range of business and philanthropic endeavors including a public cemetery in South Philadelphia, long known as "Ronaldson's." He served as the first president of the Franklin Institute from its founding in 1824 until his death in 1841.

⁵Thomas Hibbert (d. 1833?), began a nursery garden in Philadelphia, in 1823, which was soon a major source for greenhouse plants and flowers for the florists trade. In 1831, Hibbert formed a lucrative partnership with Robert Buist, and together they acquired the old M'Mahon nursery. In the short years of their partnership Hibbert and Buist issued a number of important plant and gardening guides, and won numerous horticultural awards.

⁶Alexander Parker, operated the "Moyamensing Botanic Garden" in the city of Philadelphia between Ninth and Tenth Streets in "Love Lane" just south of Lombard Street. Parker specialized in greenhouse plants for the Philadelphia market

All available evidence suggests that the Poinsettia was first sent to the Bartram Garden in the fall of 1828. Introduced to the public in 1829, the new scarlet Euphorbia became a popular mainstay of the local florist trade.

and the garden boasted a green house 33' long and a hot house 27' long. The visit of the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society in 1830 noted "Some box trees are trimmed with great art, so as to form globes, diamonds and spears."

⁷Robert Buist (1805-1880), another émigré from Scotland, was trained at the Edinburgh Botanic Garden. In Philadelphia, he served as gardener to Henry Pratt at Lemon Hill. In 1831, Buist, recently partnered with Thomas Hibbert, returned to Great Britain to purchase the latest stock in plants. In spite of the death of his partner in 1833, Buist's business increased, eventually outgrowing his city nursery and green houses at the southwest corner of Twelfth and Lombard. Buist moved his nursery in the late 1840's to a large site in Kingsessing southwest of the Bartram Garden known as Rosedale. The success of Buist helped speed the failure of the Bartram Botanic Garden.

⁸William Prince and his brother operated the Linnaean Botanic Garden and Nursery that had been begun by their father, a contemporary of John Bartram. The garden was more commercial nursery than botanic garden, despite the name. The Prince brothers maintained agents for sales in Philadelphia and most other cities on the eastern seaboard, and they were major competitors for the trade of the Bartram Garden. By the 1830's the competition had turned sour. Both the Prince and Bartram Gardens were forced to sell off their stock and close in the late 1840's.

⁹Also unknown to Graham, in 1834 a German author, Johann Klotzsch had published a description of the same plant from an example grown from seed and flowered by the son of Willdenow in 1833. Klotzsch supported the name *Euphorbia pulcherrima* used by Willdenow and also placed several Mexican specimens from Humboldt and other German botanists in the same species.

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"In Bartram's Garden." *Hand-colored photograph, ca. 1900, by Henry Troth (1859-1945). Troth, a professional photographer active in Philadelphia, was an early contributor to the National Geographic. Gift of Dallett Hemphill to the John Bartram Association.*

Bartram Broadside is edited by Joel T. Fry, Curator, Historic Bartram's Garden. Ideas and contributions on the Bartram connections to exploration, horticulture, botany, and other natural sciences are encouraged.

Historic Bartram's Garden



The Pre-Revolutionary Home of John Bartram
Naturalist ♦ Botanist ♦ Explorer

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