



Creating "parlors" in private pleasure gardens had precedents in the late 1700s. The Belvedere estate in Maryland is an early example. (Augustus C. Weidenbach, artist, ca. 1858, Maryland Historical Society)

This echoes in several respects the detailed account William Hayes Acklen gave of childhood memories of his mother's gardens, evoking a sense of what it must have been like to stroll through the grounds on the family's evening walks:

On either side of the front entrance of the dwelling were huge marble vases

containing the slender, graceful vines of the Russelia. Passing down the stone steps, on both sides of the flagged terrace were beds of scarlet and white geraniums bordered by rows of candytuft, leading into the formal garden which lay between the mansion and the tower.²²

Russelia, variously referred to as a fire-cracker, fountainbush, or coral plant, is a tropical weeping shrub with bright green foliage and colorful red blooms. Placement in planters near the house was, no doubt, intentional as russelia attracted hummingbirds. Scarlet and white geraniums and candytufts reflected the Victorian taste for a summer display of flower-filled beds with plants arranged according to height and color. William Acklen also noted exceptional features of the Belmont gardens in addition to statuary, water fountains and a famous genus of waterlily:

Beyond, in the center of the first circle, surrounded by four marble statues representing the four continents of the world, was a marble fountain. In the pool Victoria Regia bloomed, said to have been the only one ever known to have flowered, up to this time, in the northern climate.²³

By the 1830s, water fountains had replaced sundials as the quintessential garden ornament although, as A. J. Downing wrote in 1849, due to a lack of skilled artisans, "fountains are highly elegant garden decorations, rarely seen in this country."²⁴ Nonetheless, tiered marble fountains, including the one in front of the mansion, were—like gazebos and statues—available through showrooms and catalogues. Fountain bowls, balusters, spouts, pans, and basins could be mixed and matched to suit a client's taste, a nod toward the

Victorian penchant for the eclectic. A second fountain at Belmont, located inside the greenhouse, was topped by a menacing cobra-headed waterspout with his hood fully extended.

Groupings of statues personifying concepts such as the four seasons, four elements, four Arcadian types, and—in the case of the Belmont Garden—the four continents were common classical additions to outdoor spaces. The marble figures of Asia, America, Africa, and Europe were positioned at the corners of a square framework with a large circular fountain at the center. The continental theme was popularized through illustrations in Cesare Ripa's *Iconologia* first published in Rome in 1593. The circa 1851 Italian statues of the four continents at Belmont are identical to those in Godinton Park in Kent, England.

The earliest documented example of the four continents in America dates to the Last Will and Testament of Elias Boudinot IV who left his "four marble emblems, each being of one of the four quarters of the world," to his nephew when he died in 1821.²⁵ Boudinot, a Presbyterian of Huguenot descent, was twice elected to the Continental Congress. He later served in the House of Representatives, and received successive appointments as director of the United States Mint from Washington, Adams, and Jefferson. Visitors to the Boudinot mansion in Burlington, New Jersey, recount seeing marble statues representing the four continents displayed on pedestals in the grand hallway. However,