

6. Bees

The beehives at the far end of the meadow belong to a local bee keeper. These bees forage around the gardens in warm weather and help pollinate the fruit bushes and trees. You might also see bumble bees, like the one in the picture, foraging for nectar (and pollinating the flowers).



7. Orchard

Coming back up towards the Hall, you will find a small orchard in the southwest corner of the meadow, cordoned off by a strip of small fruit bushes. A variety of apple, plum, and damson trees are to be found here. Amongst the small fruit bushes there are white-currants, blackcurrants,

raspberries and gooseberries.

Apples and pears were grown in England before Swarthmoor Hall was built in 1586. Cherries and plums were also popular. And around that time peaches, apricots, and almonds were introduced.

Around the stone marking the Orchard, you'll see a small patch of herbs, including feverfew with its white daisy-like flowers, mint, and others.

8. Vegetable Garden

From the orchard a gate takes you into the Vegetable Garden. There are gooseberry bushes here as well as vegetables.

Depending on the time of year, you may see potatoes, broad beans, marrows or courgettes, and artichokes. There is also a small patch of herbs. The garden supplies herbs to the Barn Café.



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Garden Guide



In the 17th century and later, the Swarthmoor Hall estate was run as a mixed farm, with sheep and cattle, orchards, and a forge. We know that cabbages and apples were sold by the Fell family in the 1670s. The gardens then were probably managed to grow fruit and vegetables for consumption, as well as herbs and other useful plants. Today, the 130 acres of surrounding farmland are managed as an organic dairy farm producing milk, cheese, and cream for local consumption.

In recent years, the gardens around Swarthmoor Hall have been redesigned to foster biodiversity and as a place to wander and relax. This guide (and

the map on the inside) is intended to provide some information about what you can see as you explore. Entry is free of charge. Visitors are welcome during daylight hours.

1. Quilt Garden

In front of the Barn Café and opposite the front of the Hall is a garden designed to resemble a patchwork quilt. This Quilt Garden links to the tradition of quilting, which was very popular in the 17th century when Swarthmoor Hall was owned by the Fell family and served as a centre for the growing Quaker movement. In late spring the Quilt is planted with a variety of colourful bedding plants, such as geraniums. And in the autumn violas and tulips are planted.



open out to see map

Swarthmoor Hall

2. Front Gardens

Only since the 18th century have houses been set back behind a wall with a driveway. In the time of Margaret Fell and George Fox, there would have been direct access from the town to Swarthmoor Hall. The 1850 Ordnance Survey map (see inside) shows the track from Ulverston leading over the packhorse bridge across Levy Beck and up into the yard between the Hall and the barn. There were very few roads in this area in the 17th century. Today, public footpaths still pass through local farmyards. When the Fell family lived here, the front door was probably on the north side of the house facing towards Ulverston, and what is now the front of the house was then the back of the Hall. Hence the front gardens are a modern design around what is now the front door.

From the mid-16th century English Tudor gardens tended to include geometric forms and topiary. A farm estate often had vegetables and fruit on either side of the path towards the front door, screened behind hedges. Herbs that may have been grown include: chamomile for headaches; fennel for weak eyes; and feverfew for 'shaking fever'. Today the small gardens on either side of the path leading up to the current front door are rimmed with box hedges and plants which bloom at various times of the year to provide a constantly changing show of colour and nectar for bees and other insects.

The lavender bush to the right of the front door is a source of lavender flowers for drying and use as a natural moth deterrent to protect the textiles in

the historic rooms. English lavender is native to the Mediterranean but has been used in England for centuries. Bees are attracted by a bank of catnip or catmint beneath the windows. Wisteria covers the wall to the left of the entrance to the East Garden.



Lavender

Unfold for map of the grounds and more...



3. East Garden

A split level garden on the east side of the house is divided by a limestone terrace wall. You may notice a few millstones which were collected by Edward Mitford Abraham between 1934 and 1950. Feel free to sit and read or relax. The border alongside the house gets plenty of morning sun and has been planted with herbaceous plants with hot colours for the summer and an edging of saxifrage.

This area, along with the meadow, is shown as an orchard on the 1850 map. Today, there are only a few trees here, including two species of birch. In the time of the Fells, this East Garden may have provided access to an outside staircase (now just a balcony) via which visitors could ascend directly to Judge Fell's chamber.

Continuing southwards alongside the house, you will find several yew trees. These are said to have been planted in the 17th century by Judge Fell, one for each of his children. Yews tend to grow more slowly as they become older, and they do not build annual rings in their wood. This means the usual method of counting the rings of a tree to determine its age, is not possible with yews. However, we do know that yews can live for hundreds of years.

Yews are native evergreen trees akin to conifers. The red 'berries' that develop on female yew trees are characteristic. The red flesh is eaten by birds such as song thrush. But the seeds are poisonous. Yew wood was used for longbows. You can identify a yew by its flat needles, pointed at the end, and the green colour of the new twigs.



Yew



unfold for more...



4. Quiet Garden

If you continue through a gap in a wall and walk round to the back of the house and under a yew tree, you will enter the Quiet Garden. This has been developed as a place for meditation, reflection, prayer or quiet worship. The solid path provides access for wheelchairs. The informal planting scheme, containing about fifty different plant species, makes use of cool colours, predominately green, white and blue. And the path meanders to encourage visitors to walk slowly and without haste. Order is imposed on some plants with the use of topiary, while strong colours are used sparingly as a sharp contrast to the quieting effect of most of the flowers. This is a place where you can just sit and enjoy the peace and quiet. At the bottom of the garden on the left there's a small shelter with a cushioned bench where you can find refuge from the wind and the rain or, if you're lucky, from the midday sun.



5. Meadow

If you leave the Quiet Garden through a gap in the stone wall at the bottom, you will find yourself going out into the meadow. In the spring you will be gladdened by the sight of a magnificent carpet of purple crocuses. *Crocus vernus* was probably introduced into Britain sometime in the Middle Ages. The plant became naturalised long ago, but is still uncommon in the wild.

If you are visiting in the summer, you will find that a broad pathway mown through the grass and flowers allows you to walk to the far end of the meadow and then along by north wall. The walls around the meadow are a useful habitat for small mammals and insects, which can creep into crevices and nest there. The ivy on the walls is trimmed back hard each year to stop it acting like a sail and pulling the wall down in windy weather. Ivy flowers late in the year and provides late albeit low-quality nectar for bees and other insects. Ivy berries are eaten by some mammals, such as pine martens, in winter when their normal prey is hibernating.

There are a number of log piles around the perimeter of the meadow which host insects and other wildlife. Bees are found in the summer hives at the northern border, and help to pollinate the fruit bushes and trees.

Native wild flowers such as buttercup, knapweed, bird's foot trefoil, plantain, hogweed, pignut, meadow woundwort, and bugle can be found growing among the variety of species of grasses. Along the stone wall side of the meadow grow wild roses, nettles, rosebay willow herb, and ivy, all of which provide food and habitat for wildlife. Rosebay willowherb is very widespread in the northern hemisphere: in Russia, it is called 'Ivan tea', and the young leaves are used to make a herbal tea.

The campfire site is for the use of groups who want to enjoy a controlled fire. The surrounding willow was planted in 2005. Some stems have been woven together to form a living hedge.



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4 Quiet garden



5 Meadow



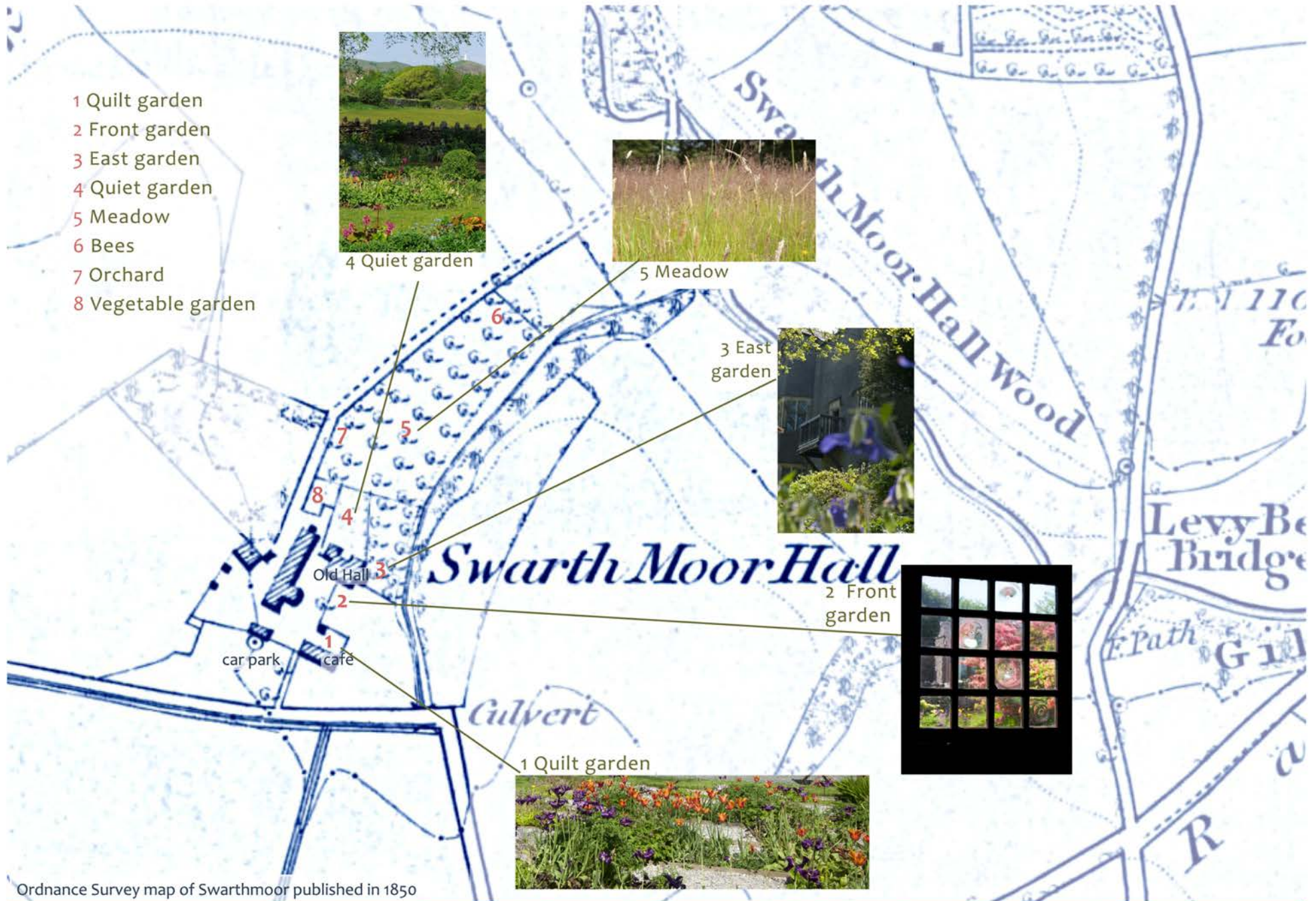
3 East garden



2 Front garden



1 Quilt garden



Ordnance Survey map of Swarthmoor published in 1850