Every garden needs a gathering place. That’s the idea behind the Hill Garden at the Birmingham Botanical Gardens. Named in honor of Maye Leigh and Nelson Page Hill, the garden rests at the foot of the Garden Center’s magnificent entry bridge. It acts as a restful haven adjacent to the busy entry plaza.

Designed by Grover and Associates of Birmingham, the Hill Garden has a decidedly formal look. This is a deliberate response to the classical architecture of the Garden Center. The rectangular lawn and lily pool in the middle of the garden reinforce a visual axis running from the temple-like belvedere atop the entry bridge through the fountain urns of the Formal Garden. Under the fountain urns is The Garden Wall with its focal point, a water wall backed with black slate. Water pours into the pool below giving a delightful sound. The still water of the lily pool mirrors this water wall. Symmetrical rows of chaste trees (*Vitex agnus-castus*) flanking the lawn and pool further emphasize this axis.

While paving is often a perfunctory result of an effort to reduce maintenance, in the Hill Garden the paving is an integral element of the overall design. Dark slate pavers, set into scored concrete, create an interesting, geometric pattern. An adjoining surface of crushed limestone, punctuated by planting beds for shade trees, echoes the effect.

One of the garden’s focal points is a glass-roofed gazebo which visually links the Garden Center with the Victorian Conservatory. The gazebo with its side seating provides an ideal shelter for gatherings, such as concerts, dinner parties, and weddings. Varying size pots near the backless benches are filled with coral vine (*Antigonon leptopus*) and annuals for a dramatic softening look at the gazebo.

In its quest to visually stimulate, the Hill Garden doesn’t ignore the most important function of a botanical garden—educate. Because this garden is among the first to welcome visitors, it serves as a “horticultural sampler,” introducing people to the kinds of plants they’ll see as they venture further. The vase-shaped canopies of the Japanese zelkovas (*Zelkova serrata ‘village green’*) lend needed shade in the summertime. Large hollies on the garden’s edge screen the plaza and parking lot. A mixed shrub border adjacent to the formal rose garden offers delightful flowers and foliage from spring until fall. In it, you’ll see bridal-wreath (*Spirea prunifolia*), dwarf abelia (*Abelia x Edward Goucher*), Japanese maple (*Acer palmatum*), yoshino cherry (*Prunus yedoensis*), Chinese Fringe

*(Loropetalum chinense)*, and Carolina silverbell (*Halesia carolina*). And when the nearby chaste trees bloom in early summer, the blue is overwhelming.

The metal West entry gates designed by George Gambrill compliment the decorative metalwork on the Plaza bridge. These gates complete the “garden room” concept and invite guests to enter. So, whether you’re interested in learning about plants and garden design or just out for a peaceful stroll, the Hill Garden is the place for you. Visit it often.
The Hill Garden
given in memory of
Maye Leigh and Nelson Page Hill
by their daughter and grandchildren
  Jane Hill Head
  Beverly P. Head, III
  Jane Head McCleery
  Leigh Hill Allison

The Garden Wall
given in memory of
George and Margaret Cochran
by their children and grandchildren
  George Lightfoot Cochran
  Toby Cochran
  Camey Cochran
  Jean Cochran Williamson
  John A. Williamson, Jr.
  Wendy Williamson Martin
  Margaret Williamson Brooke
  Ann Cochran
  James Terry Cochran
  Dan Cochran
  Gina Cochran

The Kayser Lily Pool
gift of
Simmie and Leo Kayser, Jr.

The Glass Gazebo
in honor of
Katharine Reynolds Ireland
given by
Mallie and Glenn Ireland, II

The Entry Gates
given in memory of
Mildred and Leonard Sadler Preuit
  and
  Florence and Thomas Joseph Naughton
by
  Dorothy and Albert Stephen Naughton
  Mildred and Edward Fennel Maulding

*********
Dedicated April and June 1989

Designed by W. Fancher Lane
Written by Stephen P. Bender

The Birmingham Botanical Gardens
2612 Land Park Road
Birmingham, Alabama

A facility of the Birmingham Park
and Forest Foundation