

# About the Capitol Grounds

## VOCABULARY WORDS

- **Landscape Architect:** A designer of large outdoor spaces, such as parks and gardens.
- **Arboretum:** A special type of garden that includes mostly trees, but can include other plants.



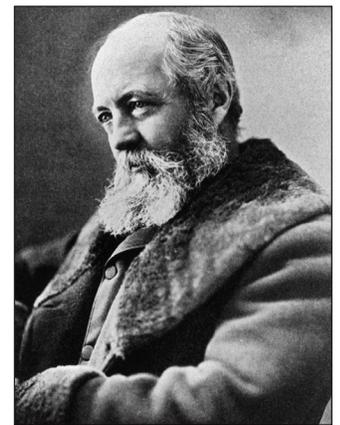
*U.S. Capitol Grounds in spring*

## What are the Capitol Grounds?

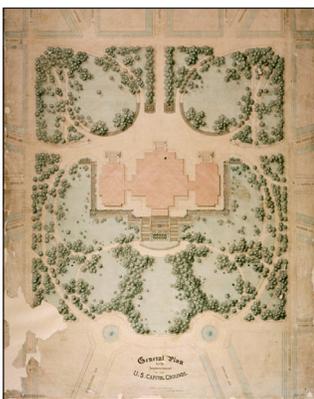
The grounds around the U.S. Capitol are a public park with more than 58 acres, or 44 football fields, of land. Today the grounds are classified as an **arboretum**, because there are more than 100 different types of trees. There are also thousands of flowers planted on the grounds every year.

## Who designed the Capitol Grounds?

The land around the Capitol was originally a wild forest, not an easy place to visit. A **landscape architect** named Frederick Law Olmsted designed the Capitol Grounds in 1874. He designed many famous parks across the United States, including Central Park in New York and the Biltmore Estate in North Carolina. Today, he is known as “The Father of American Landscape Architecture.”



*Frederick Law Olmsted,  
Landscape Architect*



*Olmsted's 1875 Capitol Grounds Plan*

## How were the Capitol Grounds designed?

Olmsted's design was inspired by famous parks and gardens in Europe. His goal was to create a beautiful public green space that enhanced the beauty of the U.S. Capitol. He used curved paths to offset the straight lines of the building and planted trees that added to the sweeping views of the Capitol. He also included areas with benches so visitors could enjoy the scenery.

## Why are the Capitol Grounds important?

Congress wanted both the U.S. Capitol and the surrounding grounds to be a gathering place for the people. Olmsted felt the same way and designed the grounds as the nation's stage and a public park for Capitol Hill neighbors, visitors and workers.



*Visitors spend time on the grounds*

# Design the Capitol Grounds

## YOU WILL NEED:

- Green construction paper
- Markers or colored pencils
- Ruler
- Scissors
- Pencil
- Glue



1. **Fold one sheet of 8 ½" x 11" green construction paper in half** widthwise (hamburger style). Cut along the crease. Use one of the halves as your base layer.
2. **Next, take a different sheet** of 8 ½" x 11" green construction paper and fold it in half widthwise (hamburger style). Cut along the crease. Then fold one of the halves lengthwise (hot dog style).
3. **Use a ruler to mark at 3 ½ inches and 6 inches** on the folded paper from Step 2. Then cut the folded paper into three sections.
4. **Take one of the smaller folded paper sections** from Step 3 and draw half an oval shape along the crease of the paper. Keep the paper folded and then cut out the oval shape. Repeat with one of the other paper sections from Step 3.
5. **Now, take the biggest section of paper** from Step 3 and draw a semi-circle shape on the crease and cut out the shape.
6. **Take your base paper** from Step 1 and start laying out the oval and semi-circle shapes.
7. **Once your design is in place**, use a glue stick to set the pieces in place.
8. **Get creative!** Add details by drawing pathways, flowers, and grass around your grounds with color pencils or markers.
9. **Want to add 3D details?** Cut thin strips of paper and crumple them up to look like treetops or bushes. Glue them around your grounds.
10. **Optional – add a Capitol Model to your grounds design.**

