



The tree-lined streets and alleys of downtown Dover are perfect for walking and looking at beautiful old Victo-

Delaware State University/Susan Yost  
rian homes and gardens. This view is going north on State Street from Cecil Street.

# Walking the gardens of Dover delightful

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Dover is a very walkable town, especially for lovers of old Victorian homes and flower-filled gardens.

I had this thought while strolling along State Street a few weeks ago, my eyes dazzled by vivid blue hydrangeas (*Hydrangea macrophylla*) complemented by orange day-lilies (*Hemerocallis fulva*).

The succession of plants and colors around the homes in downtown Dover amazes me — one after another, an inconspicuous green plant will burst into color, and then recede again while another pops out. The camellias (*Camellia japonica*), dogwoods (*Cornus florida*), and cherries (*Prunus spp.*) of spring are already distant memories.

Now, it's the pinks and purples of crape-myrtle (*Lagerstroemia indica*), phlox (*Phlox paniculata*), and purple cone flower (*Echinacea purpurea*), along with the yellow of black-eyed Susans (*Rudbeckia hirta*), which catch your eye. Trellises are lush and tropical-looking with the red tubular flowers of native trumpet-creepers (*Campsis radicans*). Strawberry-shrub (*Calycanthus floridus*) is blooming quietly with its fragrant maroon flowers.

What's next? Native asters (*Aster spp.*) and goldenrods (*Solidago spp.*), tiger-lilies (*Lilium lancifolium*), zinnias (*Zinnia elegans*), and others that I'll remember as I see them. Every year, I seem to need to be reminded anew of this annual flowering ritual. However, this year, the heat has made the flowers around our house bloom

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## Garden Tales

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about two weeks earlier than usual — a reminder that we need to curb our production of greenhouse gases and help stop global warming.

Dover also has a hidden charm known mainly to locals. This is the series of alleys running in-between and parallel to many of the main north-south streets of town — American, State, Bradford, Governors, New, Queen and Kirkwood streets. The alleys are quieter than the streets, with only a few cars. Walking or bicycling the alleys is a great way to catch glimpses of backyards with flowers of all sorts, venerable old trees, vegetable gardens, compost bins, and the occasional laundry line (I'd like to see more laundry lines — they're "green" and also make your sheets crisp and fresh-smelling).

Downtown Dover has a distinct charm, which I hope will be preserved. For me, it's based on Dover's stately old Victorian homes and other beautiful houses, many dating from the late 1800s and early 1900s, and some even older. Every house is unique, and so are their gardens.

On the campus of Delaware State University, the Claude E. Phillips Herbarium is Delaware's center for research, education, and outreach about plant identifications, locations, and uses. Call 857-6452 (Dr. Susan Yost, Herbarium Educator) to arrange a tour of the herbarium, or for more information about this article.