Why Is There A
moon garden
In The Arboretum

It continues a three thousand year-old gardening tradition

Historically, white flower gardens were used by aristocrats of ancient India, and later by English socialites, for outdoor parties before air conditioning was invented. In order to escape summer heat, parties were held in the evening. White flowers were ideal because they shine in the light of the moon.

It provides a wonderful destination for Arboretum visitors

This garden and gazebo are a beautiful setting for weddings and receptions. For reservations, call Campus Events and Visitor Services (530) 752-2675.

It provides food sources for night-pollinating insects

In the evening, many of the flowers in this garden have a stronger scent that attracts night-pollinating moths.

The sphinx moth is attracted to white flowers by their sweet fragrance and visibility at night. As the moth feeds on nectar, it pollinates the flowers. Sarracenia xerophila (left), and Hylaeum lineatum (right), both in the Sphingidae family.

Any white flowering plant is suitable for a moon garden. Some of these scented favorites are found in this garden.

The formal white flower garden was planted in 1976 at the suggestion of Mrs. Shields' friends, Ruth Risdon Storer and Alyce Jewett.

Who was Carolee Shields?

Carolee Shields was the wife of Judge Peter J. Shields, an early champion of the founding of UC Davis. She is credited with starting the long-standing campus tradition of Picnic Day by hosting the first event in 1909.

After Judge Shields passed away, Mrs. Shields made sure that a bequest from their estate would create the Shields Oak Grove along with this garden and gazebo.

Welcome to the Carolee Shields White Flower Garden and Gazebo

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