THE COLLECTION

THE BONSAI/CAMELLIA HOUSE
The Bonsai/Camellia House contains seven historic camellia trees from the original Durfee Conservatory, built in 1867.

EPHYTIVEINE HOUSE
This house contains plants that grow on other plants (epiphytes) and vines. The types of plants in the Epiphyte/Vine House include orchids, bromeliads, tillandsias, anthuriums, and vining plants.

TROPICAL HOUSE
The Tropical House, our largest greenhouse, contains a variety of tropical and subtropical plants. In the center is a 4,000-gallon fish pond traversed by a wooden bridge.

COLLECTIONS HOUSE
This house displays the wide range of diversity that can exist within specific plant families and genera. The Collections House contains our Passiflora (passion fruit) vine collection, with its beautiful and exotic-looking flowers.

SUCCULENTS HOUSE
Succulents are plants that are capable of storing water, usually in fleshy leaves or swollen stems. One of the best-known examples of this plant group are the cacti (Cactaceae).
YESTERDAY

THE FOUNDERS OF MASSACHUSETTS AGRICULTURAL COLLEGE believed that students from all walks of life should have the opportunity to approach plant culture with scientific rigor and joy. The construction in 1867 of Durfee Plant House—one of five original buildings on campus—reflected their philosophy. With its tiered fountain and elegant ironwork, the Victorian greenhouse represented art as surely as it did science.

The original glasshouse included five sections, each with a specific climatic environment, overseen by a resident caretaker who watered plants and tended furnaces around the clock. In 1871, a botanical garden and arboretum were arranged along the southern portion of the ridge above the greenhouse, on the advice of I. A. Pilat, head gardener of New York’s Central Park.

TODAY

DURFEE CONSERVATORY continues to attract a wide and appreciative audience. Garden clubs, preschool children, visiting parents, faculty, and students use the facility year-round. The jungle-like atmosphere, with a pond and thick, overhanging branches; displays of camellias and orchids in full bloom; and collections of bonsai, cacti, and bromeliads, attract numerous visitors from on and off campus to this plant wonderland.

CHRONOLOGY

1864 Original 383 acres in Amherst, Massachusetts, purchased for the site of Massachusetts Agricultural College
1867 Durfee Plant House constructed
1875 Durfee experiment to measure surface pressure of a chili squash receives worldwide attention
1883 Japanese maples from Mount Fuji donated
1890 Two-thousand-pound century plant (Agave americana variegata) blossoms
1892 Renovations to conservatory complete
1893 New conservatory building constructed
1893 Durfee Gardens constructed
1893 Oak tree downed in hurricane; one entire house destroyed
1938 150th Anniversary of the Durfee Conservatory
1954 Major renovations to plant collection and environmental control systems
2007 The College of Natural Sciences assumes management of the conservatory
2014 150th Anniversary of the Durfee Conservatory
2017 Two-thousand-pound century plant (Agave americana variegata) blossoms