

The Secrets of Sylvan Gardens

Behind the Game

Although this game is not “historically accurate” — in that it takes place in an imaginary setting populated by fantasy species! — the setting of Sylvandale and the Sylvan Villa & Gardens was inspired in part by historical references.

The game also contains references and reinterpretations of elements drawn from Greek mythology, J.R.R. Tolkien, and Dungeons & Dragons. But this article will focus on the real-world inspirations behind the game’s story, setting, and characters.

Warning: This article contains some light spoilers for the game, so you might want to play BEFORE you read this.



Left: Diego Delso, [CC BY-SA 4.0](#). Right: Nemo bis, [CC BY-SA 3.0](#). Both via Wikimedia Commons.

Boboli Gardens (Florence, Italy) — The promenade, Naiads Pool, and the layout of the Sylvan Gardens (and its abundance of marble sculptures) was inspired in part by these famous formal Renaissance gardens built by the Medici.



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The fantastic real-world [follies](#) of Renaissance and Baroque European gardens inspired the game's Garden of Follies.

The “Orcus” mouth of [Sacro Bosco \(Bomarzo, Italy\)](#) was the inspiration for the great stone face.



Jean-Pierre Dalbéra, [CC BY 2.0](#), via [Flickr](#).

[Villa Borghese \(Rome, Italy\)](#) was another inspiration for the Sylvan Gardens — in particular, the Naiads Pool plaza and fountain.



Left: dalem, [CC BY 2.0](#) Right: Orlando Paride, [CC BY-SA 4.0](#). Both via Wikimedia Commons

The scenery of [Civita di Bagnoregio, Italy](#) was one of the inspirations for the physical character and surrounding landscape of Sylvandale.



Left: The Conservatory of Flowers. Daderot, CCo.
Right: Morgan Library & Museum. Rob Shenk, [CC BY-SA 2.0](#).
Both via Wikimedia Commons.



[The Conservatory of Flowers](#) (San Francisco, CA) was one of the inspirations for the Conservatory in the Sylvan Villa.

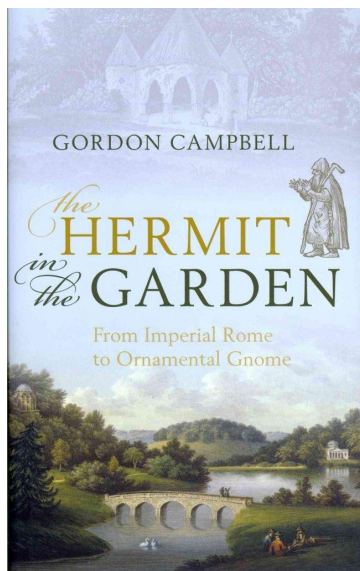
[The Morgan Library & Museum](#) (New York, NY) was one of the inspirations for the Library in the Sylvan Villa.



Left: Wunderkammer. Domenico Remps, 1690. Right: Astrolabe. Sage Ross, [CC BY-SA 3.0](#), via Wikimedia Commons.

[Wunderkammers](#) are a real thing!

[Astrolabes](#) are also real!



...and so are “[garden hermits](#)”! That’s right: for a period of time in Europe, real people lived in novel structures in private gardens of wealthy estates. Their room and board was provided by their patron and they were sometimes consulted for their spiritual wisdom.

Learn more in [The Hermit in the Garden: From Imperial Rome to Ornamental Gnome](#).