

## CHILDREN'S STORY GARDEN

*Special garden/reading room for kids*  
Westerly, Rhode Island  
Westerly Public Library/Wilcox Park

### Project Data

Size 400 SF  
Context: Centrally located in  
downtown Westerly, Rhode  
Island

### Project Description:

The Memorial and Library Association of Westerly was established in 1892 to commemorate the volunteer soldiers and sailors who fought in the Civil War. Westerly Public Library opened its doors in 1894 through the initiative of local industrialist-inventor, Stephen Wilcox. In 1898, Harriet Wilcox donated a 7-acre estate and money to establish Westerly Public Library and Wilcox Park as a memorial to her late husband. The library is both a library and a Civil War Memorial for the community. In the 1890s, Warren Manning designed a Victorian strolling garden with perimeter walks, open meadow, formal entrances, native trees and understory shrubs, and dense border plantings. In 1905, Frank Hamilton designed 7 adjacent acres that were acquired - extending Manning's concept. Arthur A. Shurcliff added to the Manning and Hamilton legacy with a formal terrace (1924) and ballustrade (1929) and a WWI Memorial (1937). Since then, the park has become an arboretum with a unique collection of native and specimen plantings. In 2004, it was listed on the National Register of Historic Places.



Elmore Design Collaborative, Inc. (EDC) with Anne Wellington was hired to design a Children's Story Garden, an extension of the lower level Children's Reading Room, as part of a major library renovation and reorganization. We worked closely with Library staff, the architect, committee members, and several volunteers. EDC developed a series of exciting and diverse schematic designs to illustrate various opportunities for this small exterior garden space. The final design was developed into construction drawings and included several bronze animal sculptures mimicking those in the children's book entitled "Runaway Bunny", two retaining walls faced with pink granite to match the library – the lower wall is castellated and provides seating opportunities, a brightly colored rubberized safety floor, lighting, and native, zone hardy and child friendly plantings. This contextual design and functional garden provides year-round interest and is a wonderful extension of the library into Wilcox Park's historic designed landscape.

