



**Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy,
Garden Conservancy, and National Park Service
Celebrate Completion of Historic Gardens of Alcatraz Project;
Parks Conservancy to Assume Management of Restored Gardens**

Smooth Transition to Next Phase of Management

OCTOBER 30, 2014: Alcatraz Island's historic but long-neglected gardens are once again lush and colorful, thanks to a fruitful decade-long partnership between the Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy (Parks Conservancy), Garden Conservancy, and National Park Service. For the past ten years the Gardens of Alcatraz have been a preservation project of the Garden Conservancy, and were rehabilitated under its guidance. The restored gardens are now moving into their next stage of evolution – one of ongoing stewardship and interpretation under local management – and will continue bringing history to life at Alcatraz.

“The Garden Conservancy counts our decade-long collaboration with the Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy and the National Park Service among our most productive and successful partnerships,” said Jenny Young du Pont, president of the Garden Conservancy.

“During that time we have together rehabilitated and restored Alcatraz's historic gardens, building a lasting legacy for visitors to the twenty-two-acre former military and federal penitentiary. Now that the project is complete, we are thrilled to see the gardens enter their next phase. In concert with the National Park Service and the Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy, we have agreed to transfer management of the gardens to the Parks Conservancy. We know from working with the Parks Conservancy over the years that they will be excellent stewards of these historic and important landscapes.”

“Vintage images and historical records of the Alcatraz gardens from the mid-1800s through 1963 help guide our continuing restoration efforts,” said Frank Dean, General Superintendent of the

Golden Gate National Recreation Area. “The Gardens of Alcatraz are a wonderful and unexpected surprise for the 1.4 million annual visitors to the island.”

“Our hope is that the beauty and complex nature of these historic gardens will become better known,” said Greg Moore, President & CEO of the Parks Conservancy. “The Alcatraz Gardens project is a tribute to those who tended the gardens in the past, as well as to those who work to preserve and tend them today.”

Although the Garden Conservancy’s and Parks Conservancy’s roles have changed, the organizations continue to work together. The Garden Conservancy is overseeing the completion of baseline documentation of the gardens, which will serve as a guideline for ongoing maintenance and preservation of the gardens. The Garden Conservancy also continues to assist the Parks Conservancy with existing donor relations and to serve in a general advisory capacity. The Parks Conservancy is assuming management of the gardens, including responsibility for staffing, publicity, interpretation, and educational programs, and will preserve the Gardens of Alcatraz in accordance with the guidelines established in the baseline documentation.

“We congratulate everyone involved in this project on its successful completion,” said Ms. du Pont. “It’s gratifying to see the Gardens of Alcatraz move to the next level. We look forward to a continued partnership with the Parks Conservancy to ensure that the gardens provide beauty and inspiration for visitors to the island. The Gardens of Alcatraz project is a terrific example of the Garden Conservancy’s mission in action: saving and sharing outstanding American gardens for the education and inspiration of the public.”

Historic Gardens of Alcatraz project: An ambitious decade-long partnership

The rehabilitation of the historic gardens began in 2003 with the National Park Service and the Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy enlisting the Garden Conservancy to lead the effort to restore the gardens and to interpret the significance of the gardens to the public. The project was ambitious. It included removing forty years of overgrowth and decay to restore five key garden areas, gathering historic documentation and keeping detailed records of work performed, developing a volunteer garden program to help care for the gardens, and promoting and interpreting the gardens with guided walks, brochures, a website, book, slideshow presentations, and social media.

To support the project, the Parks Conservancy established a yearly budget and the Garden Conservancy led a fundraising effort, engaging dozens of generous supporters and foundations across the country. Leadership support was provided over many years by the Fernleigh Foundation. Major contributors also included the S.D. Bechtel, Jr. Foundation, which awarded three separate grants to the project. In 2006, a *Save America's Treasures* grant was secured and successfully matched by grants from the S.D. Bechtel, Jr. Foundation, Mary A. Crocker Trust, Fernleigh Foundation, Richard and Rhoda Goldman Fund, and other donors.

A key component of the project's success has been the active engagement of the Bay Area community. An impressive volunteer crew, including many dedicated individuals as well as leading corporations and organizations in the region, has been developed. Volunteers provide essential hands-on support, including tending the gardens, restoring its infrastructure, creating prize-winning compost, and leading docent tours.

Gardening on Alcatraz: A century and a half of history

Alcatraz Island was once little more than a barren rock in San Francisco Bay, home only to seabirds. However, gardening has been an important part of life since the mid-nineteenth century, when the island was settled by the Army. Sent to live on the cold and bleak island, military families planted Victorian-style gardens in pockets of imported soil around the somber citadel on the island as early as the 1860s. Over time, prison crews and a few carefully selected inmates also participated in the tending the landscape.

The island first served as an Army fortress, becoming a military prison in 1861 and then a high-security federal penitentiary for thirty years, from 1934 to 1963. It became a Golden Gate National Park site in 1972. For forty years, before the Historic Gardens of Alcatraz project was formed in 2003, the gardens grew wild. Today, the island's historic buildings and harsh environment are softened by thriving plantings, including 160 types of "survivor" plants that weathered a challenging growing environment as well as long periods of neglect.

For more information about the Gardens of Alcatraz, see www.alcatrazgardens.org.

About the Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy

The Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy is the nonprofit membership organization that supports the Golden Gate Recreation Area – the most-visited unit in the U.S. national park

system. Since 1981, the Parks Conservancy has provided over \$300 million in aid for site transformations, trail improvements, habitat restoration, research and conservation, volunteer and youth engagement, and interpretive and educational programs. Conservancy-funded projects, in partnership with the National Park Service and Presidio Trust, are visible across the parks' 80,000 acres, which include the Presidio, Crissy Field, Muir Woods, Lands End, Alcatraz, and more. The Conservancy's work is made possible through the dedication of its members and donors; contributions from foundations, businesses, public agencies, and generous individuals; and earned income from the operation of park stores, cafes, and tours. www.parksconservancy.org

About the National Park Service

The National Park Service (NPS) is a federal agency within the U.S. Department of the Interior charged with managing the preservation and public use of America's most significant natural, scenic, historic, and cultural treasures. The NPS manages the Golden Gate National Parks, as well as 401 other park sites across the U.S. www.nps.gov/goga

About the Garden Conservancy

Founded in 1989, the Garden Conservancy is a national nonprofit organization whose mission is to save and share outstanding American gardens for the education and inspiration of the public. The Garden Conservancy works in partnership with individual garden owners and public and private organizations, marshalling legal, horticultural, and financial resources to secure a garden's future. It also sponsors garden-study tours, presents educational programs in locations around the country, and manages Open Days, the only national garden-visiting program opening private gardens to the public. www.gardenconservancy.org

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