

Joseph Marek: Sharing a Love of Gardens through Open Days and Garden-Study Tours

Landscape architect and energetic volunteer Joseph Marek has been instrumental in the creation of several Garden Conservancy programs, including, most recently, his eighth



Joseph Marek at Smoke Tree Ranch during the Society of Fellows garden-study tour he helped organize in Palm Springs, CA

Open Day in Los Angeles and a very successful Society of Fellows garden-study tour in Palm Springs in March.

Joseph has been drawn to gardening since he was a boy. “My father was in the Air Force, so I was exposed to many parts of the country and the world. And to the climates and plant communities that go along with them.” His family moved to Alaska when he was four years old; some of his first and fondest memories are of the sweeping fields of fireweed (*Chamerion angustifolium*) and Arctic lupines (*Lupinus arcticus*) and of the rose garden in

Delaney Park in Anchorage. “That early exposure to the abundance and grandeur of the natural landscape had a powerful impact on me and continues to inform my design work to this day.”

Joseph has also lived in such far-flung places as South Texas, the Mississippi Gulf Coast, the German Rhineland, and Tidewater, Virginia. After graduating from Yale and the University of

Virginia, he settled in southern California and began a landscape architecture firm in 2001.

Joseph first became involved with the Garden Conservancy in 2003 while sharing his garden through our Open Days program. He and his partner, John Bernatz, welcomed visitors back again in 2004 and 2007. He then became the area’s regional representative, shaping several very successful Open Days in southern California that featured gardens where participants can learn and be inspired by the designs of professional landscape architects as well as home gardeners. In collaboration with co-representative Jeanne Anderson and a team of almost 100 volunteers, he organized this year’s Los Angeles Open Day in Beverly Hills on May 10. The five gardens received an average of 500 visitors per garden.

Joseph and John also joined our Society of Fellows in 2003 and Joseph now serves on the West Coast Council. This year, Joseph became part of the new Open Days advisory committee. He has also advised on the formation and the delivery of various educational programs to southern California for the Conservancy and our local members.

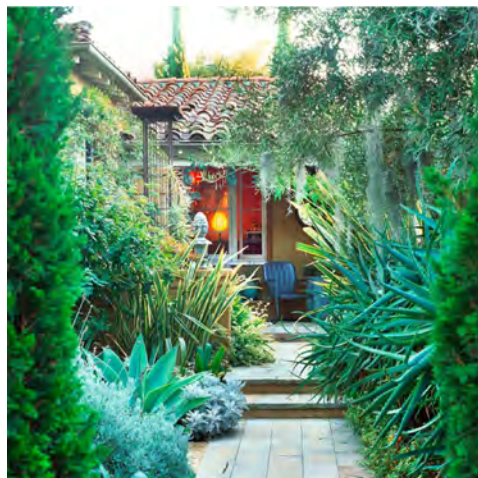
Joseph chaired the advisory committee for this spring’s Fellows garden-study tour to Palm Springs, California. “People don’t often think about Palm Springs and garden touring, but there are amazing gardens here. The climate and the natural landscape are such powerful forces and they inform every aspect of living and gardening here. Not so different from Alaska, eh?”



An Open Days garden in Hancock Park, CA, designed by Joseph Marek



Ric and Suzanne Kayne’s garden in Indian Wells, CA, designed by Joseph Marek and part of the Palm Springs garden-study tour in March



Joseph Marek and John Bernatz’s garden in Santa Monica, a favorite of Open Days visitors