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Westchester Land Trust to Hold Conservation Easement Permanently Protecting 13-acre Rocky Hills property in Mount Kisco

The Westchester Land Trust (WLT) is pleased to announce that the conservation easement protecting Henriette Suhr's 13-acre Rocky Hills property in Mount Kisco, has been transferred to the WLT by the Garden Conservancy. The assignment of the easement ensures that the conservation values of the property will continue to be protected in perpetuity.

Lori Ensinger, WLT's President said, "Rocky Hills is truly a spectacular property with significant open space resources." It improves water quality by protecting against surface-water runoff due to its location in the watershed of the Chappaqua Brook and Kisco River Basin – which is part of drinking water supply watershed of the Croton Reservoir. It is also an important habitat for numerous species of plants and animals native to the area, and serves as a scenic view shed.

WLT is one of the leading conservation organizations working to protect and enhance the natural resources in Westchester and eastern Putnam counties. Since its founding in 1988, WLT has protected more than 225 properties totaling more than 7,500 acres.

In 2000, Henriette Suhr granted a conservation easement to the Garden Conservancy to protect the property from development, intending it to pass to Westchester County upon her death so that the County might "operate and maintain the property as a public garden." In late 2013, Mrs. Suhr, with the mutual agreement of Westchester County and the Garden Conservancy, dissolved her agreement with the County, and thereafter, working with the Garden Conservancy, explored new ways to protect her property and preserve it as a green space rather than as a public garden. Following her death this past March at the age of 98, her estate acted upon her expressed wishes and worked with the Garden Conservancy on a plan to assign the conservation easement to WLT.

Mrs. Suhr's commitment to open space was recognized in many ways. She received the 2010 Best Green Friend Award from the Friends of Westchester County Parks. In 2014, the Town of New Castle also honored Mrs. Suhr "for her avid and continuing interest in conservation, preservation, and acquisition of open spaces within the Town."

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“We’re pleased that Henriette Suhr’s land will be preserved as green space, in keeping with her passion for environmental stewardship, through this transfer of the conservation easement to the Westchester Land Trust,” said Jenny Young du Pont, President of the Garden Conservancy, a national organization dedicated to saving and sharing outstanding American gardens.

The Garden Conservancy and WLT will collaborate to continue Henriette Suhr’s environmental and gardening legacy. The Estate of Mrs. Suhr, in partnership with the Garden Conservancy and WLT, opened Rocky Hills to the public for a Garden Conservancy Open Day on October 24, 2015, and are hopeful that future owners of the property will agree to do so as well. The two organizations also plan to continue the popular Rocky Hills Lecture Series, which has been held at the Chappaqua Public Library for a number of years. “We are truly honored to work with such an important and impactful organization as the Garden Conservancy, and look forward to continuing our partnership around Rocky Hills to benefit the community for future generations to come,” notes Ms. Ensinger.

The *New York Times* has called Rocky Hills “an eight-acre wonderland” of beautifully arranged flowers, shrubs, and trees, for which Mrs. Suhr received the Foundation for Landscape Studies’ 2009 Place Maker Award. To preserve her garden legacy, the Garden Conservancy is documenting the garden as well as the personal stories of Henriette, her husband, William, and others who helped build the garden at Rocky Hills over the last fifty years. The project, part of a Garden Conservancy program to document endangered gardens, will use images, text, audio, and video to produce a lasting and dynamic experience of the garden online.

About the Westchester Land Trust: Based in Bedford Hills, NY, WLT's conservation efforts impact the long term health of the Westchester and eastern Putnam communities as well as those neighboring them through the protection of air and water quality, food supply and critical habitats for the more than 9.5 million residents in the surrounding areas. Its efforts also ensure the preservation of scenic view sheds and the creation of passive recreation opportunities. WLT works together with public and private partners to preserve land in perpetuity through the donation of property, fee acquisition, or use of legal instruments called conservation easements. To learn more, visit westchesterlandtrust.org

About the Garden Conservancy: Founded in 1989, the Garden Conservancy is the nation’s leading nonprofit organization dedicated to saving and sharing outstanding American gardens for the education and inspiration of the public. It helps outstanding private gardens become public, and existing public gardens manage natural and manmade challenges. The Garden Conservancy’s signature Open Days program provides access to hundreds of private gardens across America, and the Conservancy’s lectures, tours, and symposia offer a source of contemporary ideas in gardening, design, and preservation. The Garden Conservancy is headquartered in Garrison, NY, with a West Coast office in San Francisco. For more information, visit gardenconservancy.org

Photos: Rocky Hills in Mount Kisco

