

FROM MARTHA

Teach and Inspire

In the small rural town of Bishopville, South Carolina, Pearl Fryar has created a garden that contains hundreds of elaborate topiaries and attracts about 5,000 visitors each year.



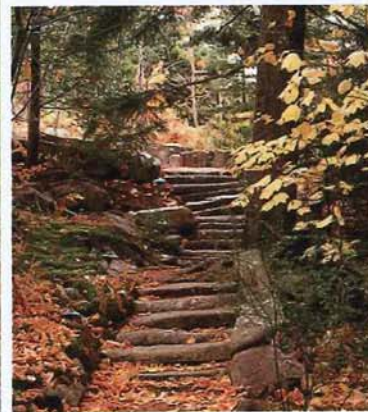
Growing Interest

Learn all about the Garden Conservancy, an important organization that preserves and shares exceptional American gardens.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY MARION BRENNER

The Garden Conservancy

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I am a voyeur of the first order when it comes to other people's gardens. An organization that permits me to visit and study remarkable landscapes from the East to the West Coast is the Garden Conservancy (gardenconservancy.org), founded 26 years ago by the legendary American gardener Frank Cabot. The mission of the conservancy is simple: to save and share outstanding American gardens for the education and inspiration of the public.

By partnering with gardeners and their communities, the conservancy preserves gardens across the country. The notion of sharing—which is at the core of the organization—is achieved in part by allowing the public to visit gardens on certain set “Open Days.” These practices allow the organization to champion the importance of gardens and the role they play in our everyday lives, our history, and our culture.

The conservancy publishes a complete annual calendar of Open Days, and I love to study it, hoping that I will have enough free time to visit some of the gardens. There is so

much to learn in the vast world of horticulture, and I have never, ever been disappointed on such a visit. Last year, more than 300 private gardens in 22 states participated in the Open Days program—all beautifully varied in terms of plant materials, designs, intentions, and ages, to ensure that each visit offers diversity and interest and education. More than 70,000 people visited the gardens in 2015 alone.

In addition to an annual membership, there is a Society of Fellows, which offers an even deeper engagement for those committed to study through other forms of tours—both domestic and international—as well as lectures and study groups.

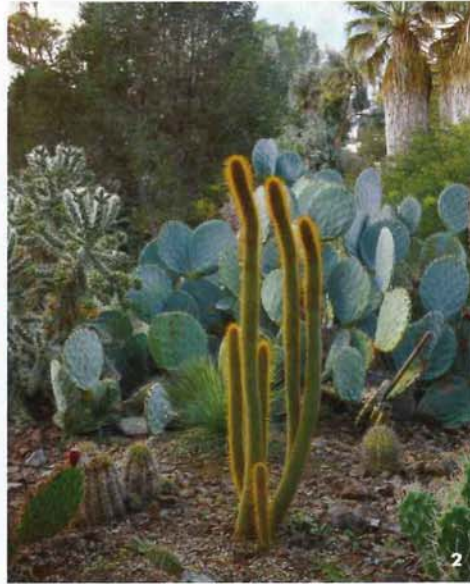
In celebration of its 25th anniversary, the conservancy recently published an amazing, lovely book, *Outstanding American Gardens* (Stewart, Tabori & Chang, 2015), which should be a fixture in every gardener's library. Some evocative photos from it are included on the following page. I hope you enjoy looking at them—and I hope you'll be able to visit a garden or two (or three).

A Trip to Maine

I invited the Garden Conservancy's Society of Fellows to visit my garden at Skylands last summer. Clockwise from left: The stone terrace is planted with containers I've collected over the years. The fellows travel throughout the world on garden-study tours; we spent a delightful morning at Skylands. A faux-bois table sits in the woodland garden. The stone stairway was designed by landscape architect Jens Jensen in the 1920s.

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Outstanding American Gardens

Celebrating the rich horticultural tradition of the United States, the Garden Conservancy's new book, *Outstanding American Gardens*, showcases 50 remarkable preservation projects and Open Days gardens throughout the country, including the ones shown here.

1

To preserve the view of Nantucket Harbor, Susan Burke dug a trench for a garden about six feet below the porch of her house. A path winds through this romantic double border.

2

Ruth Bancroft's three-acre dry garden in Walnut Creek, California, inspired Frank Cabot to establish the Garden Conservancy; it was the organization's first preservation project.

3

Judy and Michael Steinhart open Iroki, their 58-acre Westchester County, New York, garden, twice a year for the Open Days program. Their collection of Japanese maples is a sight to behold in autumn.

4

The Gardens of Alcatraz were created in the mid-1800s before falling into disrepair decades ago. The Garden Conservancy led the efforts to restore the landscape on this infamous rocky island.

5

Landcraft Environments nursery owners Dennis Schrader and Bill Smith have created a plant collectors' paradise on Long Island, New York, filled with colorful tropical, subtropical, and annual plants.

6

George Schoellkopf's Hollister House Garden, in New England, reinterprets the classic English cottage garden stateside. The preservation project is divided into lushly planted garden rooms.