

QUERCUS

THE LANDSCAPE AND ARBORETUM PROGRAM AT BARD NEWSLETTER

Spring 2018 | Volume 13, Issue 1

SPECIAL BLITHEWOOD ISSUE

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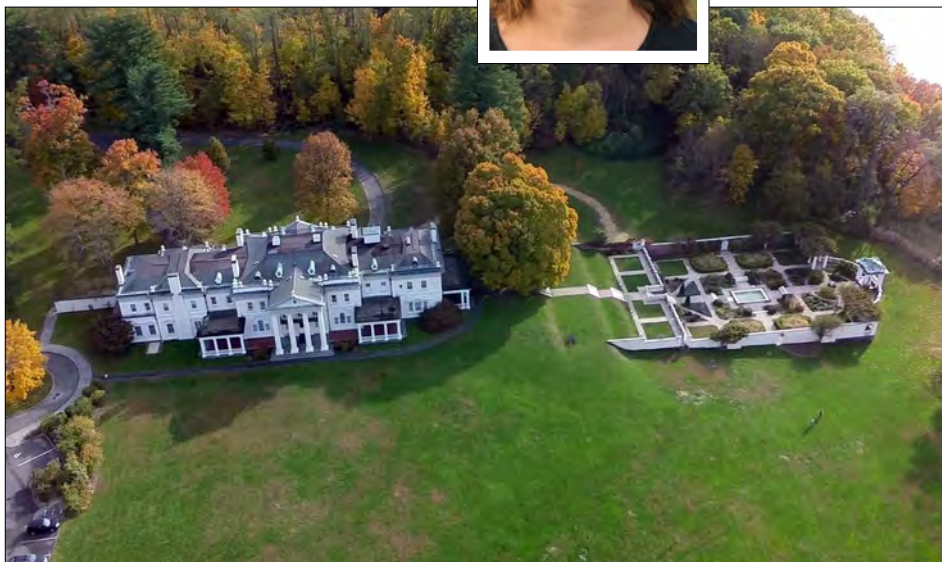
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From the Director

Whoosh! 2017 flew by and now on to 2018. The Arboretum's focus will continue to be on Blithewood Garden this year. The College's prized ornamental Italianate garden has been the subject of much recent discussion and planning with our new partners at the Garden Conservancy, as you will read about in this special Blithewood Garden issue. We are continuing rehabilitation planning on the site and hope to encourage excitement around the garden with a variety of special events. Specifically, I invite you to join me in celebrating the 115th anniversary of the garden's creation at our Fall Equinox Blithewood Garden Party. The September gala will be a good time to stop and appreciate the timeless beauty of this delightful space—and to acknowledge that we must invest in its future. Last year, we completed an engineering report on the garden, using ground-penetrating radar to look at the drainage pipes that help manage water on the site. We also installed new interpretive signs at the house and garden to help educate visitors; produced a first-ever Blithewood brochure that will be available at the garden later this spring; and welcomed a herd of local goats back to the grounds to help control our overgrown invasive vegetation. We look forward to doing even more in 2018 for this spectacular garden!

Happy Spring!

Amy Parrella '99





Blithewood Garden PHOTO: Amy Parrella '99

Bard College and Friends of Blithewood Garden Kick Off 115th Anniversary Campaign

Built in 1903, Blithewood Garden is proudly celebrating its 115th anniversary this year. Over the past century, the garden has been transformed from a secluded estate rose garden into a welcoming public space with a rich selection of luxuriant plantings that abound each year to greet Blithewood's many thousands of visitors. And with its awe-inspiring backdrop of the Hudson River and Catskill Mountains, the garden is a much sought-after venue for local events, parties, photography, and film. It is also a popular stop along a Hudson Valley Greenway hiking trail. Simply put,

Blithewood Garden today educates, dazzles, and captivates adults, children, and families from the Bard community, Hudson Valley region, and beyond.

To build on these strengths and ensure the garden's vitality now and for generations to come, the Friends of Blithewood Garden and Bard College are embarking on a major strategic initiative—the 115th Blithewood Garden Anniversary Campaign—to raise funds for critical projects that will:

1. establish a fund for garden infrastructure repairs;
2. establish a fund to endow the garden and future educational and maintenance programs;
3. attract new audiences through programs that connect gardening to the arts and humanities, and support the mission of Bard College; and
4. secure the future of the garden as an inspirational and recreational green space for quiet contemplation, nature appreciation, and horticultural mastery.



Check Us Out on YouTube!

Bard film graduate Sarah deVeer '17, currently the science outreach coordinator for the Center for Civic Engagement, created a fantastic three-minute film that showcases the arboretum and its offerings in all seasons. Check it out on the Bard Arboretum website at bard.edu/arboretum/about, or on YouTube at <https://youtu.be/7jyesK0RB28>. Thanks for the great work, Sarah!

Become a Friend of Blithewood Garden Today and Help Us Rehabilitate the Garden!

*“Blithewood is one of the most charming villa residences in the Union.”
—Andrew Jackson Downing, *A Treatise on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening*, 1841.*

Blithewood Garden, located in the heart of the Hudson River National Historic Landmark District, is a nationally significant Beaux Arts gem and one of Bard College's most beautiful horticultural assets. As one of the first estates to incorporate the design of the landscape with the main house, Blithewood represents an important milestone in the American picturesque movement. The garden is one of the few complete Hudson River estate gardens that remain from the era. But at more than 100 years old, it is in need of immediate repairs to its infrastructure.

The mission of Friends of Blithewood Garden is to rehabilitate and preserve this outstanding and inspiring American garden for future generations of visitors. Toward that end, Bard has joined forces with the Garden Conservancy, a national nonprofit organization, to address repairs to the garden's structures and hardscape. Friends of Blithewood Garden is dedicated to steering the project forward by raising both visibility and funds, and advocating on the garden's behalf.

Friends of Blithewood Garden hopes to raise a minimum of \$2 million to cover the cost of structural repairs and endow the garden for the future. Please join us by donating today and help keep Blithewood beautiful for another 100 years! Your donation will act as an annual membership to the Friends of Blithewood Garden.

Members at all levels will receive *Quercus*, the Arboretum's quarterly newsletter; advance notice of special events; and an invitation to join Friends of Blithewood Garden meetings.

\$10,000 Wisteria

Host an event* in Blithewood Garden for up to 50 people
One-hour, on-site garden consultation by a Bard College horticulturist
(limited to the Hudson Valley area)

\$5,000 Boxwood

Private guided tour of Blithewood Garden for up to 15 people
One-hour, on-site garden consultation by a Bard College horticulturist
(limited to the Hudson Valley area)

\$1,000 Rose

Two free tickets to any Bard College event at the Richard B. Fisher Center for the Performing Arts (maximum value \$75/ticket; reservations must be made in advance)

Receive a notable rose plant, similar to the ones showcased in Blithewood Garden

\$500 Peony

Receive a notable peony plant, similar to the ones showcased in Blithewood Garden

\$100 Iris

Receive Arboretum note cards featuring American photographer Stephen Shore's close-up, black-and-white image of pine tree bark (packet of 10 cards/envelopes)

\$50 Foxglove

\$10 Daffodil

Any amount is appreciated.

* Events can include: photography session, reunion, social club gathering, meeting, outdoor team-building, conference, or other to be determined. Sorry, no weddings.

To become a Friend of Blithewood Garden, visit annandaleonline.org/blithewoodgardens. Your donation will help us preserve Blithewood Garden and educate the public about Blithewood's important legacy as one of America's most significant Beaux Arts estate gardens.



Blithewood Garden in the fall PHOTO: Amy Parrella '99

Progress Report on Garden Rehabilitation

In late 2016, Bard and the Garden Conservancy jointly announced a new partnership to rehabilitate Blithewood Garden, a Beaux Arts–style, sunken garden designed by Francis Hoppin in the early 20th century. As a result of our collaboration with the Conservancy, particularly with Anne Semmes and Pamela Governale in the Preservation Department, planning for the rehabilitation of the garden has been moving forward.

The Conservancy helped us form the Friends of Blithewood Garden, a group that meets regularly to raise visibility for the project and plan fund-raising efforts. Last summer, with the assistance of Bard archivist Helene Tieger and Visual Resources staffers Debra Klein and Amy Herman, the Stevenson Library hosted an exhibition of historical documents about the garden, digitized the documents, and placed them online (omekalib.bard.edu/exhibits/show/blithewoodgarden/item/1789). The College website now has a page with information about the garden, the rehabilitation project, and how to become involved or make a donation. A brochure on the history of the garden was recently completed and is now available at the Arboretum website (bard.edu/arboretum/gardens/blithewood). A print version of the brochure will soon be available at the garden.

In keeping with the Beaux Arts aesthetic, Blithewood Garden is highly architectural, and it is these architectural elements that have been hardest hit by the passage of time. The site is heavily used and remains open to the elements—and public—year-round. The garden's iconic view of the Hudson River is framed by a copper-roofed pavilion, flanked by two wisteria-covered pergolas. The columns of the pergolas and the piers of the pavilion are in disrepair, with plaster falling off in chunks in some places and mortar crumbling from between the bricks. Two of the garden's walls are topped with terra-cotta balustrades and masonry piers, which are also in poor condition. Many of the balusters have not survived years of freeze/thaw cycles, and the brick walls require repointing and possibly some stabilization work.

Together with the Garden Conservancy, Bard is reviewing an engineering assessment to identify and prioritize repairs to the garden. Next steps include getting bids from contractors, determining fund-raising goals for each phase of the repair work, and implementing the resulting fund-raising plan.



Blithewood structural elements in disrepair PHOTOS: Amy Parrella '99



Follow Blithewood Garden on Instagram
[#friendsofblithewoodgarden](https://www.instagram.com/friendsofblithewoodgarden)

New Signage at Blithewood

Where is Blithewood Garden? What is this mansion? How do you get to the waterfalls? These are a few of the questions that we regularly receive from visitors to Bard's campus arboretum. In a long overdue project, Bard recently completed the installation of two signs that address many of these concerns. In 2015, the Bard Arboretum was awarded a grant from the Hudson River Valley Heritage Area to design, manufacture, and install two interpretive signs for Blithewood Garden. With the help of Bard Center for Environmental Policy graduate student Gabrielle Weiss '17, the signs for the mansion and gardens were researched, written, and designed. Bard then contracted Terrabilt, a local firm that specializes in innovative modular systems of signage products and uses sustainable materials and environmentally clean production processes, to manufacture the signs, which were installed in spring 2017.

Weiss also assisted the Arboretum office with trailhead signage designs. Bard currently lacks any trailhead signs, leaving first-time hikers guessing where trails start and end, the difficulty of the terrain, and the identification of various features along the route. The new signage follows Bard's sign standards and is ready and waiting for funding, final designs, and installation.



New interpretive signs at Blithewood PHOTOS: Amy Parrella '99

Bard

Blithewood: Its History, People, & National Significance

The History

Blithewood was significant in the Picturesque movement in architecture (1840–1880), as it was one of the earliest estates in the United States to emphasize the landscape more than the house. Blithewood and its grounds garnered national attention due to the prominence of the original designers: Alexander Jackson Davis, an influential architect; Andrew Jackson Downing, a renowned landscape designer and horticulturalist; and Robert Donaldson, a patron of the arts and the property's innovative owner. The trio collaborated to create the first American-style Carpenter Gothic cottage, a gatehouse located east of the main house.

In 1860, John and Margaret Bard, who purchased part of the Donaldson estate in 1853, donated 18 acres for the founding of St. Stephen's College (later renamed Bard College).



Blithewood South Facade: The siting of the house reflected Zabriskie's preference for a southerly exposure rather than a spectacular view of the Hudson River to the west. For this reason, unlike most Hudson River homes, Blithewood does not face the river: it runs east to west, facing south, assuring winter sun and southerly winds in the summer. Porches flank two sides of the building, allowing for clear views of the gardens and river.



Alexander Jackson Downing

"Blithewood...is one of the most charming villa residences in the Union. The natural scenery here, is nowhere surpassed in its enchanting union of softness and dignity...the river... and the horizon grandly closing in with the tall blue summits of the distant Kaatskills."

—Andrew Jackson Downing, *Treatise on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening*, 1841

The House

The house you see today was built by Captain Andrew C. Zabriskie (1853–1916) and his wife, Frances Hunter Zabriskie (d. 1951), who purchased the property in 1899. They commissioned Francis L. V. Hoppin (1867–1941), of the architectural firm Hoppin & Koen, to design a house and garden. The 30-room, Georgian-style manor house is approximately 45 by 200 feet and made from brick and stucco.

After Captain Zabriskie's death in 1916, his widow, Frances, maintained the estate. Greatly interested in horticulture, she took an active part in the development and upkeep of the gardens and grounds. After Frances died in 1951, the Zabriskies' son, Christian, donated Blithewood, by then an 865-acre estate, to Bard College.

The manor was named Zabriskie Hall by the College and used as a conference center until 1956, when it was renovated for use as a women's dormitory. Renamed Blithewood a year later, the structure remained a dormitory until 1987, when it was renovated and transferred to the Levy Economics Institute of Bard College.

In 1990, the U.S. Secretary of the Interior included Blithewood as a contributing property in the Hudson River National Historic Landmark District, a 32-mile stretch that extends from Germantown to Hyde Park.

Acquisition Timeline

1680



Land acquired from Native Americans by Pieter Schuyler.

1725

VanBenthuyzen family purchased property from Schuyler.

1801

John Allen and Mary Johnstone purchased the property from the Armstrongs, naming it Annandale, after Mary's Scottish heritage home.

1795-1798



General John Armstrong and Alida Livingston purchased property from VanBenthuyzen and named it "Mill Hill".

1810

John Cox Stephens purchased the property from the Allens.

1835

Robert Donaldson and his wife Susan Jane Gaston purchased the estate, renaming it Blithewood.

1836



Alexander Jackson Davis redesigned the Donaldson home and also landscaped the surrounding grounds using A. J. Downing's Picturesque style.

1853



John and Margaret Bard purchased Blithewood, renaming it Annandale.

1860

The Bards found St. Stephen's College on acreage within the estate, which was later named Bard College.

1899



Captain Andrew C. and Frances Hunter Zabriskie purchased Annandale, renaming it Blithewood. The Davis-designed Donaldson home was removed, and the Hoppin-designed Zabriskie mansion and garden was built.

1951

Christian Zabriskie donates Blithewood to Bard College.



Funded in part by the Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area



Goats leased from Green Goats of Rhinebeck, New York, help restore Blithewood's vista. **PHOTOS:** Dan Smith

Goats Help Clear Invasive Overgrowth from Historic Blithewood Landscape

The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) has awarded Bard College a three-year Invasive Species Rapid Response and Control Grant that will support a plan to use goats to clear invasive plant overgrowth from a 1.5-acre hillside near Blithewood Manor.

In order to maintain scenic views from the gardens and grounds of the estate, the landscape must occasionally be cleared of vegetative overgrowth, a process that is complicated by steep slopes, irregular terrain, and, in recent years, the appearance of fast-growing invasive plant species that are displacing native meadow plants and need more frequent removal. The hillside is now dominated by the invasive tree of heaven (*Ailanthus altissima*), common reed (*Phragmites australis*), and Japanese knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*). Two years ago, in an effort to find a sustainable alternative to fossil fuel-emitting mowers, weedwackers, and chain saws, Bard successfully experimented

with using a herd of goats, leased from Rhinebeck's Green Goats, to graze and clear the western slope. The hillside was enclosed with temporary fencing, and the herd remained for several weeks until all vegetation was stripped.

"The goats do what they love best—eating brush, being outdoors, and standing on hills. They require only daily fresh water and some human assistance to topple the *Ailanthus* that have become too tall and thick for the goats to topple themselves," says Bard Energy Manager Dan Smith, who co-manages the project with Horticulture Supervisor and Bard Arboretum Director Amy Parrella '99. "The DEC grant will enable us to continue to expand this project, sustainably address invasive plant species, and maintain these historic vistas," adds Parrella.

The \$56,920 DEC grant provides cost-share funding to host the goats for three growing seasons (through 2019) and expand the area grazed by the goats by 50 percent. The grant also includes funding for student stipends to assist with daily watering and monitoring of the herd. At the end of the third season, we will seed with a native wildflower mix to restore the hillside to preinvasive conditions.



Temporary fencing along a hillside cleared by visiting goats **PHOTO:** Amy Parrella '99



Drone images before and after goats **PHOTOS:** Dan Smith



Arboretum Celebrates 11th Anniversary with Arbor Day Tree Planting

Join us on Friday, April 27, and help plant a tree in celebration of the 11th anniversary of the dedication of the Bard campus as an arboretum. Our ceremonial tree planting will take place outside Bertelsmann Campus Center at 2:00 p.m. The planting of a maidenhair tree (*Ginkgo biloba* 'Princeton Sentry') is part of the Landscape and Arboretum Program's ongoing effort to populate the campus with a younger generation of trees in the face of the decline of so many mature trees, primarily due to age and disease. This particular tree will help provide shade along the nearby walkway, which is currently exposed to the scorching sun for most of the day.



Teachers and children from the Bard Nursery School and Community Children's Center join Bard faculty, students, and staff to help plant a ginkgo tree for Arbor Day 2017. PHOTOS: Amy Parrella '99

Arboretum Recognized by ArbNet and Tree Campus USA

The Landscape and Arboretum Program at Bard College has earned accreditation from the ArbNet program and has, for the ninth consecutive year, been recognized by Tree Campus USA, an Arbor Day Foundation program.

ArbNet, an interactive, collaborative, and international community of arboreta and tree-focused professionals, facilitates the sharing of knowledge, experience, and other resources to help arboreta meet their institutional goals and works to raise professional standards through their Arboretum Accreditation Program. Accreditation is based on self-assessment and documentation of an arboretum's level of achievement of accreditation standards, including planning, governance, number of species, staff or volunteer support, education and public programming, and tree science research and conservation.

"The Landscape and Arboretum Program at Bard is excited to be officially recognized and accredited among the international community of arboreta and tree professionals with our achievement of Level II ArbNet certification," says Arboretum Director Amy Parrella '99. "This distinction will allow us to offer leadership, influence, and collaboration with other organizations by serving as a model of a Hudson Valley college campus arboretum, rich in botanical resources, living collections, and academic and public programming."

Tree Campus USA honors colleges and universities—and their leaders—for promoting healthy trees and engaging students and staff in the spirit of conservation. The organization helps these institutions establish and sustain healthy community forests, and encourage student participation in making their campuses greener and cleaner.

To learn more about these organizations, <https://www.arboday.org/programs/treecampususa/> and arbnet.org.

Understanding What Lies beneath the Surface

In an attempt to acquire a more precise understanding of where the water lines run underneath Blithewood Garden—as part of an ongoing engineering study taken on by the Friends of Blithewood Garden—Bard contracted C2G Environmental Consultants, LLC to survey the garden using ground-penetrating radar. This technology identifies and locates metallic and nonmetallic objects, old excavations, and subsurface anomalies to a depth of 18 feet. The dual-frequency antenna allows the viewing of both shallow and deep subsurface features with a single unit that looks almost like a push lawnmower.

The survey confirmed many of the water lines indicated in a 1990 Lepera & Ward, PC garden plan, but several lines were disproved and others remain a mystery. Understanding where the water lines are located will assist us with above-ground concerns such as sinkholes and drainage issues. It was very interesting to learn that a sophisticated network of piping runs throughout the garden and empties out on the west end at the ravine, and that remnants of a historic catch basin may be buried in the lawn. These findings, along with the study's water-flow test of the garden drains, indicates that there are several areas of the site that should be further investigated to uncover sources of drainage problems.



RIGHT: Ground-penetrating radar equipment

PHOTO: Courtesy of Cara Gentry, C2G Environmental Consultants, LLC

LANDSCAPE AND
ARBORETUM
Program at Bard

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SAVE THE DATE!

SATURDAY
SEPTEMBER 22

Fall Equinox Blithewood Garden Party

Join us for garden tours, a garden anniversary celebration with cake and drinks, children's lawn games, giveaways, and an evening garden lecture, "Architectural Gardens: Challenges of Preserving Formal Structures in the Landscape."