When we bought Mettawa Manor about 30 years ago, it was already clear that the climate was changing and I wanted to be part of doing something positive. So I wanted two things from the garden: beauty and the opportunity for scientific experimentation.

— Bill Kurtis

My own garden, now about twenty years old, is a synthesis of all my articles and garden visits, with lots of plants from friends. It isn’t a great garden, but it contains great stories. For me, gardens and garden writing are really about people and stories.

— Tovah Martin

When you leave a garden knowing more than when you arrived—something about a particular plant, a construction material or method, a drainage solution or watering concept, or even about yourself—then the experience, the Open Day, is a success.

— Joseph Marek

Garden Conservancy Open Days showcase beautiful gardens around the country. Behind every great garden, there’s a garden creator. Or several. And behind every Open Day, there are dedicated regional ambassadors, generous garden hosts, and friendly volunteers. Meet a few of the many people who make Open Days such a vibrant and engaging community.

Read more about 2019 Open Days on page 6
From the President

A Gardener’s Generosity

Just last week I had lunch with a longtime Open Days host. She spoke very compellingly about how important she felt it was to make her garden accessible to all sorts of people. For this gardener, it has always been, and continues to be, crucial to share with others the joy that the act of gardening brings. It is exactly this spirit of generosity upon which our much loved Open Days program is founded.

Our discussion over lunch that day also reminded me of something I’ve felt for a long time: that the garden is a “gateway.” It is well-nigh impossible to garden for very long without wondering about your environment. One day you’ve picked up a six pack of pansies from a big box store, and, before you know it, you’re Googling pollinator-friendly native perennials! It has often been said that the garden is where we as humans try to recreate the idea of paradise. I think this may be true—although we will go to extreme measures to keep deer away from our hostas—mostly we seek to share both the beauty and the lessons to be found in our own little slices of paradise.

The Garden Conservancy Open Days program speaks to this urge to share. The hundreds of garden hosts who have opened their private horticultural enclaves over the years embody this spirit. The passion that arises from watching the seasonal change in the blooms and leaves inspires many of our hosts to open two or three times each year. Gardens are truly the only art form where continual change and evolution is an essential part of the medium. I’ve occasionally heard someone say, “Oh, I saw that garden last year.” I don’t bother to try to explain that that garden was not only different last year, it was different last week. I know that eventually the spirit of gardening will overtake them, and they will understand.

This year we have reminded our friends new and old that discovery and exploration are essential parts of the Open Days experience. Unlike a park, or a botanical garden that has regular hours, the private gardens that open just briefly need to be sought out and pursued. Our garden hosts prepare weeks ahead for their devoted visitors, who in similar fashion begin planning their sojourns from the moment their Open Days Directory arrives in the mail. Each garden becomes, for just a few hours, the gathering space of a unique community—a group of like-minded and curious enthusiasts. Whether a small urban garden of containers, a lush vegetable garden producing a bumper crop of summer treats, or a full-on estate dotted with monumental sculptures, each Open Day garden offers a unique set of experiences, a unique and very personal story, generously shared by the garden creator. Like gardens themselves, the experience is no less significant for its fragile and fleeting nature. Seek, explore, discover, delight, and engage in the generous conversation that is a garden.

James Brayton Hall
President and CEO
Kids Surrounded by Greenery Grow Up Happier

Many people intuitively believe nature is good for us. A 2018 study in Denmark now provides statistical evidence of nature’s impact on our well-being, concluding that children who grow up surrounded by green space have 55% less risk of developing mental health problems later in life. The study, conducted by researchers at Aarhus University in Denmark, analyzed data on approximately one million Danish children born between 1985 and 2003 and living in the country at the age of 10. The study was published in the journal Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America and reported by Fast Company magazine on March 1, 2019.

On the Big Screen

The Gardener documentary, starring Garden Conservancy founder Frank Cabot and his impressive gardens at Les Quatre Vents in Quebec, was released in the United States in early 2018 and in Australia in the fall. It continues to be shown in theaters, including at Hopewell, NJ, Salem, OR; and Middleburg, VA, in April and at the Chesapeake Film Festival in early October. To learn more about the film, visit thegardener-movie.com/about. To order DVDs or video recordings, or to inquire about scheduling further screenings, please contact the US distributor, Gravitas Ventures, at gravitasventures.com.

Another documentary film, Beatrix Farrand’s American Landscapes, premiered on March 15, 2019. The film follows noted public garden designer Lynden B. Miller as she explores the remarkable life and career of America’s first female landscape architect, Beatrix Farrand (1872-1959). For more information and the schedule of screenings, please visit the Beatrix Farrand Garden Association’s website at www.beatrixfarrandgardenhydepark.org.

Donna Mortensen Named Chief Operating Officer

In March, our former Vice President for Finance and Administration, Donna Mortensen, was formally recognized as COO. It acknowledges the larger role she has been playing in the organization, overseeing all aspects of finance, human resources, facilities, and administration, says President and CEO James Hall. For many years, Donna “has kept this place running smoothly.”

After earning a bachelor’s degree in business administration and finance from SUNY New Paltz, Donna worked for the outside auditing firm that handled financial reporting for the Conservancy during its very early days, when checks were handwritten and records kept in paper ledgers. In 2004 she joined the certified public accounting firm UHY LLP, auditing nonprofit organizations and educational institutions, and in July 2006 she joined the Garden Conservancy staff.

As the Garden Conservancy grew as an organization, so did Donna’s role. Her part-time position became full-time. She took on responsibility for human resources issues and facilities management in 2014 and, starting in August 2016, served as Acting Executive Director for ten months. Her increased involvement in Garden Conservancy events, tours, and programs across the board “give the numbers a much stronger meaning,” Donna says. She also was instrumental in organizing a strategic planning review with a cultural consulting firm, Lord Cultural Resources. This current project will inform the continued evolution of the Conservancy.
Greenhouse and Nursery Capacity Grows at Peckerwood Garden

Pamela Governale, the Garden Conservancy director of preservation, traveled to Peckerwood Garden in Hempstead, TX, to conduct the annual conservation easement monitoring in February. While there, she also toured the renovated greenhouse and nursery operations. In the greenhouse, highly efficient climate control systems have been installed. The new systems allow staff to receive updates and monitor greenhouse conditions using their cellphones and to adjust the temperature, humidity, and water remotely, as needed. This has improved Peckerwood’s ability to conserve important horticultural specimens and have also enhanced propagation.

Peckerwood’s recently relaunched nursery operations are using the original site of the legendary Yucca Do Nursery. Peckerwood’s director of horticulture, Adam Black, hopes the nursery will fill a niche for plant collectors by offering many of Peckerwood Garden creator John Fairey’s exceptional collection of Mexican plants, as well as other rare and popular specimens.

With all this increased productivity, Peckerwood has brought Craig Jackson on staff as its nursery and collections manager. Craig has been involved with the garden as a volunteer for several years, working on projects such as mapping the garden collections, and is now serving in a more official capacity. Adam reports that the nursery inventory is steadily growing, with many exciting species in the pipeline. Future plans include seasonal mail order offerings to address the frequent requests from collectors and other gardens out of the immediate region.

Mining the Archives: Plant (and People) Companions

The Garden Conservancy Documentation Program is utilizing many different types of archival materials to create a vivid portrait of significant American gardens. Our archivist Julia Kloth has been charged with cataloging and synthesizing information from the collections of the gardens we are documenting.

One of the major elements in each garden’s archival collection is the plant list. In compiling comprehensive plant lists for Rocky Hills and the John P. Humes Japanese Stroll Garden, both in New York, and the Chase Garden in Washington State, Julia was struck by the way both garden creators and plant communities benefit from partnering.

Some plants just seem to be made for each other—and perhaps some people, too. William DeFaya at the Humes Garden, and Ione and Emmott Chase all exemplify successful partnerships that resulted in beautifully orchestrated garden design. It should not be surprising, then, that their designs relied on the use of native plants and their natural allies, because plants, like people, are searching for partners that will bring out their best qualities and share their space with equanimity.

The companion effect happens naturally in the wild: flora in fields, meadows, and forests all evolve for mutual benefit, neither overpowering nor paling in comparison. Good companions are said to enhance one another’s growth or, in some way, protect each other from harm. Some companion plants may help discourage pests through natural substances in their leaves, flowers, or roots that repel insects. Companions can also act as living mulches—suppressing weeds and shading the soil, keeping roots moist and cool. “Nature—red in tooth and claw,” as the saying attributed to Tennyson famously describes—may seem only like a battle for the survival of the fittest, but the truth is some species prefer to grow with specific others, balancing out their differences and providing ideal conditions for optimizing their unique traits. Good companions enjoy the same growing conditions without competing too aggressively. Plant diversity also contributes to a healthy thriving environment.

And so, Julia notes, our Documentation Program continues to illuminate the role of gardens in our lives and extract larger lessons from them.
Architectural Historian Completes Report on Blithewood Garden

Significant progress has been made on the rehabilitation project that the Garden Conservancy has been working on with Bard College in Annandale-on-Hudson, NY. A Historic Structures Condition Report for Blithewood Garden was recently completed, bringing us closer toward the goal of returning this significant and well-loved garden to its former glory. Blithewood, a Beaux-Arts gem on the banks of the Hudson River, was designed and created at the turn of the 20th century by architect Francis Hoppin (an alumnus of the prominent architectural firm McKim, Mead & White).

The Garden Conservancy funded the condition report with a portion of an anonymous gift of $50,000 received in 2018 for the project. In addition to a comprehensive analysis of the conditions at Blithewood Garden, the report also provides a description of the historic development of the garden, recommendations for repair and treatment methods, measured drawings of architectural elements, sketches, and photographs. The report was prepared by Old Home Restoration Preservation Services, the firm of local architectural historian and preservation expert Matt Alexander. Matt has a deep appreciation for Blithewood Garden, saying that it was an honor to be part of the effort to revitalize the garden. During his time on site, he reports, “by shifting my attention only slightly, I was able to simultaneously experience the sunlit brick walls, the wind playing within the changing canopy foliage of nearby trees, the movement of light and shadow across the Catskill escarpment beyond the river, and even the cries of eagles circling on thermals directly above…I especially enjoyed observing the reaction of [visitors] entering its walls for the first time, as they recognized that they had discovered something special.”

The Historic Structures Condition Report is now being used to identify specifications and phasing for the rehabilitation work, allowing contractors, craftsmen, and materials fabricators to bid on the project and provide cost estimates. The project has taken an important step forward and the Garden Conservancy continues to work with Bard College and the Friends of Blithewood Garden to plan the rehabilitation work, raise public awareness, and devise funding strategies.

Western Hills Turns 60

Created by acclaimed plantmen Lester Hawkins and Marshall Olbrich and long celebrated for its collection of rare and unusual plants, Western Hills is turning 60 this year. Located in Occidental in Sonoma County, the garden has been a destination for avid gardeners since the 1960s. Tim and Chris Syzbalski, owners of Western Hills for the last nine years, are planning a 60th anniversary celebration later this year. Sean Hogan, noted horticulturist and owner of Cistus Nursery in Portland, OR, will be the featured speaker for a guided “Walk and Talk” and the garden will offer iconic plants for sale from both the Cistus and Western Hills nurseries, many propagated at Western Hills. For more information about visiting the garden, see westernhillsgarden.org.

The Folly, a fanciful gazebo-like structure at the entrance of Western Hills. Photo courtesy of Tim Syzbalski
Open Days—the Garden Conservancy’s best-known and beloved educational program—enters its 25th season in 2019. Since 1995, we have been celebrating the country’s most extraordinary private gardens and showcasing the tremendous diversity of horticultural expression across the country. Open Days is a celebration of the transformative power of gardens. Gardens bring people together. They reflect our cultural values; they teach wonder, and rigor, and grit; and they lead us to become more engaged citizens with a more profound understanding of our connection to the Earth and to each other. Our program, however, celebrates more than great gardens. Open Days celebrates people—gardeners—as creators and providers, as protectors and agents of change. It celebrates our collective efforts as gardeners to create spaces of beauty and tranquility and to understand and nurture living things.

We save and share outstanding American gardens because we believe that gardens have the power to make our lives—and our world—a better place. Gardens are created by people, for people. We strive to provide a forum through which people and gardens come together.

Following are just a few of the many people you may meet through Open Days this year.

“I learn something new from gardens every day. We simply need to open our eyes and our minds and enjoy.”

Landscape architect Joseph Marek has been actively involved with the Garden Conservancy since he and his partner, John Bernatz, were asked to share their garden during the 2003 Los Angeles Open Day. Since 2007, he and Jeanne Anderson have been the LA Regional Ambassadors, coordinating Open Days that have been called “a love letter to Los Angeles.” Joseph joined the Garden Conservancy board of directors in 2015. “I learn something new from gardens every day. We simply need to open our eyes and our minds and enjoy. When you leave a garden knowing more than when you arrived—something about a particular plant, a construction material or method, a drainage solution or watering concept, or even about yourself—then the experience, the Open Day, is a success. I use my own garden to try out new ideas, new plants and combinations. Many elements in our garden have been inspired by visits to other gardens through Open Days and the Garden Conservancy’s Society of Fellows garden-study tours. I always come back from looking at gardens with ideas. Always.”

Mark your calendars for the May 5 Los Angeles Open Day.

Tovah Martin leading a Digging Deeper discussion in Glenn Hillman’s garden in Litchfield, CT (2018)
“My garden is meant to be a welcoming sanctuary to friendly humans as well as non-humans.”

Shobha Vanchiswar cannot recall a time when she wasn’t interested in gardening. Most of her childhood in India was spent outdoors. “I’d while away hours observing flora and fauna, experimenting with seeds, examining parts of owners and forms of leaves, nibbling on fruits. I’d return with a collection of leaves and seeds, cuts from thorny plants, bites from disturbed ants, and a deep sense of time well spent.” In graduate school, Shobha escaped the demands of scientific research by reading garden books. Her life in science morphed into one of consulting and coaching on garden design, blogging on her website (seedsofdesign.com), speaking about gardening, and letting her garden serve as muse to her painting and poetry. “I’ve painted almost all the owners that bloom in my garden and written corresponding poetry. This progressed to printing the images on fabric to create soft home furnishings. Pillows, tea towels, napkins etc. All of the proceeds support HIV/AIDS girls at an orphanage in India.”

Shobha's garden is a small suburban plot, just a quarter of an acre, but boasting an incredible array of features, “it doesn’t know that it’s small.” She loves sharing it. “Visiting private gardens through Open Days taught me a great deal. Often the gardeners themselves were present and very generous with their time and information. If my garden can in any way inspire, delight, or instruct another, I’m very honored to pay it forward.” Visit Shobha's garden on the May 18 Westchester County, NY, Open Day.

“There was something special, something powerful, about a beautiful garden in the city that speaks to all kinds of people.”

Acclaimed public garden designer and self-described “serious plant lover” Lynden Miller has welcomed visitors into her garden in Sharon, CT, since the 1st Open Days season in 1995. A painter, Lynden was recruited by her friend, Elizabeth Barlow Rogers, to rescue the Conservatory Garden in Central Park and has never looked back. “I realized that there was something special, something powerful, about a beautiful garden in the city that speaks to all kinds of people. This restoration was as much about people as it was about plants.” Public space in New York City has changed greatly since 1982, from often run-down places to vibrant landmarks that improve both quality of life and economic vitality. Central Park was a turning point.

Based on her belief that good public open spaces can change city life, Lynden has since worked on over forty other gardens and parks, including Bryant Park, the New York Botanical Garden, and Wagner Park in Battery Park City. “Garden design is an art form. I approach it with the many tools of a painter and plantsman combined with the challenges of time and weather. In my public work, I hope to give city dwellers pleasure throughout all four seasons with wonderful practical plants that can be maintained for the future.”

Join Lynden at her June 12 National Speaker Series discussion about the garden at the Frick Collection in New York City. She will also host a July 27 Digging Deeper in her Sharon, CT, garden.

“My gardening life began when I was given a hellebore.”

Fifty years ago, as a young homemaker with limited resources, Judy Ward was given a hellebore by a dear neighbor and her gardening life began. Another friend, the author of a wild guide to Missouri wild owners, inspired her appreciation for native plants. Judy began studying horticulture seriously, both on her own and in classes at Meramec Community College’s renowned horticulture program. The garden became her love and, through trial and error, she transformed a rough wooded slope into a lush retreat. She has a collection of native wild owners, daisies, and early spring blooming shrubs, along with many dogwoods. Because of deer, she has eliminated most of her daylilies but has transitioned to peonies. After retiring from commercial interior design, Judy turned to watercolor and oil painting and became a volunteer for the local Garden Conservancy Open Days team. Visit Petite Vallée on the St. Louis Open Day, June 8.
Open Days

“Unlike architecture, landscapes evolve and change. This makes them exciting but also fragile.”

With a background in architecture, Chicago-based landscape architect **Maria Smithburg** is always interested in making connections between buildings and landscapes, but gardens speak to her soul. “Unlike architecture, which is frozen, landscapes evolve and change. This makes them exciting but also fragile. The Garden Conservancy preserves a legacy that could be lost quickly.” Maria has shared her projects with Garden Conservancy constituents for years; this summer, it will be a wondrous rooftop garden in downtown Chicago overlooking Lake Michigan. These particular clients, serious art collectors, started with a large rooftop that Maria designed. When they doubled their outdoor space, Maria created an inventive integrated scheme: a series of living spaces and gardens with varied moods and functions defined by trees, planters, and a large pergola. “The sky and lake, of course, provide another level of focus altogether.” In addition to siting important sculpture, Maria brought the owners’ passion for art into the very heart of the design, using colors and textures from a Kandinsky painting to animate and unite the rooftop rooms. “This has been an incredible collaboration. Perhaps the greatest compliment is that my clients now use the interior spaces that link visually and physically to the roof garden much more than grander spaces that do not.” Join Maria for a July 13 Garden Masters Series program in this Chicago garden.

“I don’t know a single gardener who isn’t an idea thief.”

Many of you know **Tovah Martin** as a wise and inspiring garden writer, certainly one of the most insightful voices of our time. Some know her through Garden Conservancy special programs, including her unforgettable fashion show of indestructible houseplants where she and several handsome helpers strutted their stuff to the Rolling Stones showing off sturdy plant beauties.

It seems she’s always been on this garden path. “I have so much respect for the Garden Conservancy because it was visiting a few public gardens as a child that inspired me. I was born in suburbia, where gardening wasn’t popular, but I was THAT kid. Other girls had a sweater drawer, I had a seed drawer. I wanted to be the Johnny Appleseed of marigolds. About that time I decided to write a book about a garden and remember setting up a typewriter on our ping pong table (long before I could type). Later, when I was working at Logee’s Greenhouses in Connecticut, I wrote about gardens and plants all the time but studied my way away until someone finally convinced me to try getting a piece published. My own garden, now about twenty years old, is a synthesis of all my articles and garden visits, with lots of plants from friends. It may not be a great garden, but it contains great stories. For me, gardens and garden writing are really about people and stories. The way my writing has evolved has a lot to do with having my own garden, having a serious romance with this land, and wanting so badly to reveal and expose people to this level of love.” Join Tovah for a July 20 Digging Deeper in Roxbury, CT.

**Joshua Werber**, a Brooklyn-based visual artist who is developing something of a cult following, got involved with plants and gardens almost by accident. A storm downed large trees in his parents’ yard and he set out to create a new landscape for them. “I don’t have a formal degree in horticulture or landscape design, so I gave myself an education by going to as many Open Days as possible.” Joshua has done a range of work professionally, including fashion styling and designing gardens, interiors, and jewelry. “Whatever the medium, it’s all creative problem solving. Playing with owners allows me to experiment with gesture, form, and negative space the way I once did with ceramics.”

Joshua lets the materials guide the creative process in making sculptural oral headpieces. “The forms of the petals, the structure of the foliage, or just the way a plant moves in the breeze informs the gesture and shape of the work.” It has also become an Instagram sensation. For years, Joshua created a new headpiece each week and posted them under #FloralTeteATete. “I found **Dennis Schrader** and **Bill Smith** through Open Days. I am a huge fan of their garden—so many ideas, so much thoughtfulness—and their nursery, Landcraft. I now use their beautiful even fantastical plants frequently in my work, so their garden was an obvious location for my workshop.” Join Joshua for a July 6 Garden Masters Series workshop during an Open Day on the East End of Long Island, NY.

“Unlike architecture, landscapes evolve and change. This makes them exciting but also fragile.”

**Joshua Werber** Photo by Zandy Mangold

**Joseph Gromacki’s Kelton House Farm in Fredonia, WI**
“My plant collection reflects a rich period for gardening, when native American varieties were being gathered by botanists such as John Bartram and Mark Catesby and shipped to England.”

North of Milwaukee, Kelton House Farm is an exceptional collector’s garden. It gives beguiling form to Joseph Gromacki’s deep knowledge and infectious passion for colonial American culture, gardening, and historic preservation. Joe practices law in Chicago, but about twenty years ago he bought this Wisconsin property and started gardening in earnest. “Virtually all of my free time during the growing season is devoted to gardening.”

Joe meticulously restored a circa 1740 saltbox house from Connecticut and lled it with his collection of Americana. The gardens Joe designed around it are geometric with roots in the earlier Tudor period. The naturalistic style emerging in eighteenth-century Europe did not appeal to colonial American settlers because “there were ample reminders of wilderness at every turn. Their gardens were intended to represent nature tamed by man, ordered through geometry, neatly trimmed, and enclosed within a fence or hedge.”

Like other members of the Open Days community, Joe looks for ideas and inspiration in gardens he visits. “I also draw heavily on my library of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century books on horticulture, botany, garden design, and farming. Many of the same titles were owned by Thomas Jefferson and George Washington.” His carefully assembled plant collection of almost 1,000 varieties cultivated before 1750 reflects “a particularly rich period for gardening, when native American plant varieties were being gathered by botanists such as John Bartram and Mark Catesby and shipped to England.” Join Joe for his July 20 Garden Masters Series program in Fredonia, WI.

“The prairies... can save the planet.”

Since 1997, Open Days visitors have flocked to Mettawa Manor, just north of Chicago. Owners Donna LaPietra and Bill Kurtis have been partners in work and life for nearly 40 years, producing award-winning work in television, Im and, radio. With Bill as anchor or host (his rich voice can be heard each week on NPR’s Wait, Wait...Don’t Tell Me!) and Donna as produc-
er, they have created an array of documentaries, often on pressing environmental challenges. Their prodigious energies also aid nonpro ts focusing on conservation, the arts, and gardens, including their own Kurtis Conservation Foundation.

Donna helped create Chicago’s internationally renowned Millennium Park and has served as its chair since 2011. She describes it as “a museum turned inside out to invite people in, using amazing art [Anish Kapoor’s Cloud Gate] and landscape design [Piet Oudolf’s Lurie Garden] to create an inclusive and vibrant urban open space. Like Millennium Park, Open Days invites people out of doors and into gardens.”

Bill has big goals, too. When they bought their home, “it was already clear that the climate was changing and I wanted to be part of doing something positive. I wanted two things from our garden, beauty and the opportunity for scienti c experimentation in connection with environmental issues.” He’s found his muse in the prairie, believing it can “save the

What’s New in Open Days 2019
Our newest suite of educational offerings, the Garden Masters Series, offers in-depth study programs that bring garden connoisseurs together in exclusive, high-caliber landscapes with leading experts in horticulture and design. Engage with innovative thought leaders as we explore the philosophy of garden creation, discuss design theory, and meet new friends in these intimate—and outstanding—garden-based programs.

We are also pleased to welcome back to Open Days this year a number of returning regions: Austin, TX; Milwaukee, WI; Chester County, PA; Delaware County, NY; San Francisco, CA; South Sound, WA; and Worcester County, MA.

Admission to Open Days is now $10 per garden. It has been several years since we increased the admission for Open Days gardens. We believe that visits to Open Days still represent a phenomenal value. All proceeds from Open Days support the growth and expansion of the Garden Conservancy’s mission-based educational programming across the country. Remember, members who order tickets in advance receive a 50% discount on admission. We will still honor Open Days tickets purchased previously.

We believe that words matter. In the spirit of gratitude for our volunteers, we have begun to refer to our regional representatives as “Regional Ambassadors.” They are the people who help us advance our mission to save and share outstanding American gardens. Far more than simply representing the Conservancy, our ambassadors are our frontline advocates!

What’s NOT new in 2019 is our deep gratitude to everyone in the Open Days community—garden hosts, regional ambassadors, countless volunteers, and thousands of engaged visitors—all of whom make the Open Days experience vibrant and inspiring. We could not do it without you! Thank you!

Garden of Kathryn Herman, Fairfield, CT
Open Days

“Our pastime has become an obsession... I love that it is never ending.”

Matthew Malin and Andrew Goetz, founders of the boutique apothecary MALIN+GOETZ, and their garden will debut for Open Days this year in Hudson, NY. Matthew comments, “We started gardening as a pastime during respite from the grueling demands of a young business in New York City. It changed our lives. Not ones to sit idle, it is great to be outside doing something physical. Motivated by all things aesthetic, we find nothing is closer to beauty and design than gardening. We are both extremely proud of having created a successful company and to be creating a garden we love, but it’s not easy to start something from nothing. We have made many mistakes; that’s how you learn.”

Matthew worked for the likes of Kiehl’s and Prada, Andrew for the Swiss design manufacturer Vitra, so they bring different skills to their partnership. Matthew adds, “The garden is no exception. I love the planning and can stare at a space for hours, contemplating my next move. Andrew is a doer. No one, and I mean no one, loves weeding more than he does. Thank God! Andrew is also a cook and we harvest our own food throughout the growing season. We now spend entire weekends, morning to evening, in the garden. Our pastime has become an obsession but we can’t help ourselves. I love that it is never ending.”

Join Matthew and Andrew for a September 14 Digging Deeper in their Columbia County, NY, garden.

“The best boss in the world is Mother Nature.”

Maureen and Mike Ruettgers, of Carlisle, MA, have been Open Days hosts since 2009. Maureen says, “Gardens are a positive force in a complicated world, which is why Mike and I like to share our garden. I love the Chinese proverb, ‘He who plants a garden plants happiness,’ but today, for me, it’s she who plants a garden creates mindfulness.” This vision ripples throughout their lives.

In addition to being a serious gardener, Maureen is an activist for education, peace, and the arts. She is vice-chair of the Manyuyudo Initiative, which provides quality education for girls in Rwanda, and a trustee at the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum. While he chats happily with Open Days visitors about his pickle recipe and passion for vegetables, Mike is also considered an “information age visionary” and has spoken at the World Economic Forum. “Mike has had bosses and been a boss,” remarked Maureen, “but we agree that the best boss in the world is Mother Nature. Things you try in the garden succeed or fail but the...
seasons keep coming and you keep trying, you keep gardening. Where else can you
and a boss like that?”
Their extraordinary garden has always
been a family affair—the Rutetgers’ kids
remember “walking picnics,” searching for
and savoring whatever was ripe—so
Maureen and Mike take care to offer
engaging activities for gardeners of all ages
and abilities. Visit the Gardens at Clock
Barn during the September 14 Middlesex
County, MA, Open Day.

“I like to play in the dirt. I like to get
dirty. I like to see things flourish.”

Why garden? For Janet Mavec, the answer
is simple, “I like to play in the dirt. I like
to get dirty. I like to see things flourish.”
She does all of those things at Bird Haven
Farm, in Pottersville, NJ, which she owns
with her husband, Wayne Nordberg, and
has been an Open Days highlight for many
years. Inspiration also abounds in the
garden, where she writes a blog, cooks for
friends, and designs Orchard Jewelry, her
line of “sculptural jewelry rooted in nature.”

“I love our vegetable garden,” Janet
says. “I approach it like decorating a room,
considering colors and textures, but it is
liberating because I can change it easily
every year. I used to deal in estate jewels
so gem colors were a regular part of my
life. The jewelry I design is more subdued,
so this enclosed garden is where I get to
play with bright combinations like orange
and pink or red and purple, colors I love
but wouldn’t necessarily wear. Color
is such an important part of life. Like
marigold yellow. I love marigolds because
I grew them as a child. My friend, the
nurseryman Ken Selody of Atlock Farm in
Somerset, NJ, laughed when he saw them
here, saying I could never be called a plant
snob.” Enjoy Bird Haven Farm during the
September 14 Hunterdon County, NJ, Open
Day and a Digging Deeper that afternoon.

“Environmentally responsible land-
scape management is based on a
process, an understanding of how
biological systems actually work.”

Since 2009, Andrea Filippone and her
twin daughters have been welcoming
Open Days visitors to Jardin du Buis,
in Pottersville, NJ. An architect, Andrea
transformed this former dairy farm into series of buildings, courtyards, and
gardens that inventively blend American
and European aesthetic sensibilities with
ecologically savvy features like a closed
loop composting system and a salvaged
greenhouse converted to solar power.
She’s long run a nursery on the property
featuring more than 50 varieties
of boxwood (“busis” in French), and
is working with scientists toward a
cure for boxwood blight.

Over the past nine years Andrea
has partnered with her husband,
environmental restoration specialist
Eric “T” Fleisher, in the rm F2
Environmental Design. T’s work as a Loeb
Fellow at Harvard in 2008 prompted the
campus to adopt organic landscape man-
agement practices. He spent more than
25 years building the sustainable parks
and landscape management program at
Battery Park City in Manhattan. Andrea
and T use rigorous scientific methods to
analyze a site, then tailor their efforts to
the site’s particular characteristics. This
natural approach improves the health
and condition of the soil which results in
healthier plants that require less mainte-
nance. With a client roster that includes
Chicago Botanic Garden, the Museum of
Modern Art, and Harvard University, it’s
safe to say their methods work. Explore
Jardin du Buis during the September 14
Hunterdon County, NJ, Open Day.

Master cider maker Steve Zaikowski at Bird Haven Farm, Pottersville, NJ

Andrea Filippone and Eric T. Fleisher of Jardin de Buis, Pottersville, NJ

Join the Conversation

These profiles barely scratch the surface of the diverse interests and talents of
our Open Days community. And they represent just a few of the hundreds
of fascinating people—garden hosts, volunteers, and visitors—whom you
can meet this year through Open Days. Each person and each garden
has a story to tell and to share.

Join the conversation!

Get out and get inspired.
Get your Open Days Directory, check out the latest additions
online at gardenconservancy.org, and experience this passion
for gardens and people, nature
and art, with Open Days.
Public Programs and Education

American Gardens and Beyond
National Speaker Series Explores International Influences

Our spring season’s headline speaker, renowned British garden designer Jinny Blom, launched our 2019 National Speaker Series with talks in four cities: Charleston, SC; West Hollywood and Woodside, CA; and Palm Beach, FL. She was received with overwhelming enthusiasm everywhere.

Jinny’s talk on March 4 in Charleston, “Striking an Original Note—Creating Gardens for Our Time,” sold out. The talk, which we presented in partnership with the Preservation Society of Charleston, highlighted Jinny’s intuitive and sensitive approach to creating a garden around a historic Cotswold estate and her work designing a Chelsea Flower Show garden for Prince Harry’s charity, Sentebale, which won a silver-gilt medal in 2013. We were thrilled to continue our partnership with the Preservation Society to present high-quality programming and to continue the discussion on garden and landscape design in Charleston.

While Jinny was in Charleston, Garden Conservancy chairman emeritus Ben Lenhardt also gave a tour of some of the city’s most important historical sites, including several fabulous private gardens that will be open during the Behind the Garden Gate Open Days on May 25 and June 1 this year, which we present in partnership with Spoleto Festival USA and the Charleston Horticultural Society.

In West Hollywood, Jinny presented a different program: “Healing the Rift—Gardens for a Troubled Planet,” focused on her experience of designing the gardens and wider landscapes of Arijiju, a Kenyan estate located on the 32,000 acre Borana Conservancy, which is used by nomadic herders and is home to threatened wildlife, including elephants, zebra, and 22 black rhinos. In a unique conservation agreement, revenues from guests to Arijiju directly support the Borana Conservancy’s wildlife protection and security efforts. The beautiful gardens and landscape of Arijiju, constructed in partnership with over 400 local workers, illustrate the lasting environmental and social impact of a major garden design and installation project. Special thanks to the Institute of Classical Architecture and Art (ICAA) Southern California chapter, Royal Oak Foundation, and Pacific Horticulture Society for promoting the talk to their members.

In northern California, we partnered with Filoli to bring Jinny to the San Francisco Bay Area, to speak in front of another sold-out crowd of 200! We are grateful to Filoli for partnering with us, and to the Royal Oak Foundation and Pacific Horticulture Society for promoting this event as well. Partnerships are invaluable in spreading the word about the Garden Conservancy and in introducing our organization to people who have similar affinities but who may not be aware of our national educational programs and
garden preservation work. We look forward to many more successful collaborations in the future.

Jinny’s final talk was in Palm Beach, timed to coincide the quarterly meeting of the Garden Conservancy board of directors, enabling them and local members to enjoy Jinny’s presentation.

Our National Speaker Series, now in its second year, brings experts and thought leaders in garden design and horticulture to multiple cities and allows them to share their ideas with as many of our constituents as possible. Our audiences in different parts of the country all experience very different environmental and cultural pressures that influence their perspective on gardens and design. To address some of these different interests, it was valuable to have Jinny present two different talks—an East Coast version, “Striking an Original Note,” and a West Coast version, “Healing the Rift.” Jinny was able to skillfully adapt her presentations to both audiences while still presenting a common central theme—that gardens are creations of significant cultural merit that reflect our values and have great capacity to impact our world.

The Making of a Green Oasis in Athens
On May 9, at the New York School of Interior Design in New York City, renowned landscape designer Deborah Nevins will present “The Making of a Garden Oasis in Athens.” She will describe the process of creating the landscape around what has been called one of the most important cultural and educational projects ever undertaken in Greece—the Stavros Niarchos Cultural Center and Park—home to the National Library and the National Opera House of Greece.

Once completed, the park—formerly 40 acres of highly degraded land—will have been transformed into a spectacular celebration of native Greek plants that beautifully mirrors the native landscape. It will be one of the largest public spaces in Europe created with only Mediterranean, drought-tolerant plants. The Stavros Niarchos Cultural Center project reflects a core principle of all Deborah Nevins & Associates projects—that good design must go beyond the simply beautiful to also embrace sustainability.

Deborah will also present this talk for us in the fall, on October 16 at the Atlanta History Center, where we are very pleased to be partnering with the Cherokee Garden Library, and on October 18 at the Chicago Botanic Garden, a longtime educational program partner of the Garden Conservancy.

Garden of the Arts & Crafts Movement
Judith Tankard is a celebrated author, landscape historian, and preservation consultant who has coauthored numerous books and articles on garden history, design, and cultural significance. On May 22, in West Hollywood, CA, we are partnering with the Institute of Classical Architecture and Art’s Southern California chapter to present an illustrated talk, “Gardens of the Arts & Crafts Movement.” Tankard, a longtime Garden Conservancy supporter and member, will give insight into the minds of the movement’s creative geniuses including William Morris, Gertrude Jekyll, and other lesser known designers, and the movement’s lasting impact on American garden design—including on several gardens that the Garden Conservancy has helped preserve.

We are also cosponsoring four talks by Judith that are being presented by the Royal Oak Foundation. The talks have a similar title, “A Sense of Harmony: Gardens of the Arts & Crafts Movement,” and the first one, in New York City on April 1, sold out. Judith is also presenting in Charleston on April 23, in Chicago on May 8, and in Philadelphia on May 14.

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Save the date for Hollister House Garden Study Weekend!

From left to right: David Culp, Martha Stewart, Lisa Roper, and Troy Scott Smith

Mark your calendars for the ninth Hollister House Garden Study Weekend, the weekend after Labor Day. A day-long symposium, “Garden Visions,” presented by Hollister House Garden and the Garden Conservancy, is the keystone event on Saturday, September 7, and features four inspiring speakers:

- **David Culp**, author, garden designer, and frequent Open Days host in Pennsylvania, “Making Meadows”
- **Martha Stewart**, television host and author, “My Life in Four Gardens”
- **Lisa Roper**, horticulturist, “The Evolution of Chanticleer’s Gravel Garden”
- **Troy Scott Smith**, head gardener at Sissinghurst Castle, UK, “Re-vita-lising Vita”

The symposium will be moderated by **Stephen Orr**, editor-in-chief of Better Homes & Gardens. For more details and to register for the symposium, please visit hollisterhousegarden.org.

The symposium will be followed, together with a sale of rare and unusual plants at Hollister House Garden. For more details on the Open Day, please see gardenconservancy.org/opendays.

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**Restoring the 70th Street Garden at the Frick**

The small viewing garden on 70th Street at the Frick Collection in New York City has been the focus of intense debate in recent years over the significance of a green space that was designed in 1977 by famed British designer Russell Page and intended to be viewed from within the museum or through an iron fence on the street. When the Frick proposed a museum expansion that would have resulted in the destruction of the garden, there was an eruption of international condemnation.

The Frick Collection has now announced a new plan that will preserve the 70th Street Garden.

On June 12, the Garden Conservancy will partner with the Frick Collection to present “Restoring the 70th Street Garden at the Frick,” a three-way conversation between leading preservationist and green-space advocate Lynden Miller, Garden Conservancy President and CEO James Brayton Hall, and Richard Southwick of Beyer Blinder and Belle, the architecture group responsible for the restoration of all the hardscape. They will discuss the significance of the garden, the outpouring of support for its preservation, and the current project to document and restore the historic garden as a part of the museum expansion project. The Garden Conservancy publicly supported the effort to save the garden and we are thrilled to have the opportunity to partner with the Frick to tell this preservation story.

The 2019 National Speaker Series is made possible in part by generous contributions from the Coleman and Susan Burke Distinguished Lecture Fund, Lenhardt Education Fund, and the Kayne Challenge Fund.

Visit gardenconservancy.org for more information on these and all of our educational programs.
Join Us in the Gardens!

The Open Days season is here and we hope you will explore this year’s unique and extraordinary gardens with us. Remember, members receive a 50% discount off advance purchases of our Open Days admission tickets. You can order by calling 845.424.6500 (M-F, 9-5 Eastern) or visit gardenconservancy.org (just click on the shopping cart icon).

The 2019 season offers you dozens of educational opportunities across the country to learn and connect with like-minded, passionate garden enthusiasts. Members receive special pricing to our Digging Deeper, Garden Masters Series, and National Speaker Series events, so remember to register early as many of these programs can only accommodate small groups and do sell out.

Current members should have received a copy of the 2019 Open Days Directory and under separate cover, their complimentary member tickets. If you have not received either or have any questions about your membership or benefits, please contact us at membership@gardenconservancy.org or 845.424.6500 (M-F, 9-5 Eastern).

If you live in or can visit Litchfield County, CT, we invite you to join us for a free, members-only tour of White Flower Farm in Morris, CT, on Saturday, June 22. Join Garden Conservancy staff and White Flower Farm’s head gardener Cheryl Whelan for a light breakfast and conversation at 8:30 a.m., followed by an exclusive tour of the famous nursery.

Space is limited, so be sure to RSVP for this free event. To reserve your spot or check the status of your membership, please contact us at membership@gardenconservancy.org.

Share Your Love of Gardens!

We invite you to visit an Open Days garden while you celebrate the upcoming holiday weekends. Make the experience even more special by giving your favorite parent, spouse, or friend a gift membership and share your love of gardens year-round.

Gift memberships can be mailed to you, or sent directly to your gift recipient. We will mail a greeting card on your behalf including a message from you, and package with their complimentary copy of the 2019 Open Days Directory. This season offers hundreds of visiting opportunities and dozens of special programs through Digging Deeper and the Garden Masters Series.

Memberships start at just $50 and include benefits aimed at keeping you connected to all we do. Join to receive member pricing on advance purchases of Open Days ticket books (50% off), invitations and discounted admission to our educational events and special programs stay informed through subscriptions to our print and electronic newsletters, and so much more!

Call us at 845.424.6500 (M-F, 9-5 Eastern) or visit us online at gardenconservancy.org/gift-membership to learn more and to order your gift membership today!
Celebrate Mom and Dad by taking them on an Open Days garden tour!

Mother's Day Weekend
SATURDAY, MAY 11
California San Francisco Bay
New Jersey Essex County
New York Columbia and Dutchess Counties, Eastern Long Island

SUNDAY, MAY 12
New York Dutchess and Putnam Counties

Father's Day Weekend
SATURDAY, JUNE 15
California Mendocino County
Connecticut Fairfield and New London Counties
New Jersey Hunterdon County
New York Dutchess County and Eastern Long Island
Pennsylvania Bucks County

SUNDAY, JUNE 16
New York Dutchess County and Eastern Long Island
Washington South Sound

Open Day at the Barlow Mountain Garden in Ridgefield, CT (2018)