Each year, hundreds of America’s best private gardens open their gates for Open Days—the only national garden visiting program of its kind in this country. Through our Open Days Program, the Garden Conservancy provides easy access to outstanding examples of design and horticultural practice—proving that there is no better way to learn about gardens than by spending time in them.

The proceeds from Open Days help the Garden Conservancy to expand not only the Open Days Program, but also its preservation assistance capabilities and education and outreach programs. To learn more about the Garden Conservancy visit us online at gardenconservancy.org.

OPEN DAYS REGIONAL REP 101
Thank you for your interest in planning an Open Day! This document is a brief overview of what is involved in recruiting private gardens and organizing Open Days for the Garden Conservancy’s Open Days Program. We do have a more detailed Regional Representatives Manual available to help you through this process. Please contact our office if you would like to request a copy.

WHAT IS A REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVE?
Regional Representatives are volunteers located throughout the country who help us identify and recruit private gardens to include in Open Days. They also work with us on marketing and promotion, recruiting volunteers, and offer general support and guidance to Garden Hosts.

The majority of our Regional Representatives are professionals who volunteer on a part-time basis and consider their involvement with Open Days enjoyable and rewarding. We have nearly 75 active Reps in a given year. Some organize Open Days on their own, while others prefer to work in pairs or even with a committee of several participants.

RECRUITING PRIVATE GARDENS
Recruiting gardens can either be done by you locally and directly or you may decide to have us invite potential Garden Hosts from our New York office at your request.

We leave the screening of gardens up to your good judgement. We encourage you to consider the diversity and range of gardens that are being created in your region as you curate them for your Open Day.

The following criteria is provided to assist you in the selection process.

“I enjoyed meeting people and talking about my favorite subject, my garden. I learned a lot from visitors. Thank you for all the work you do for the preservation and sharing of beautiful gardens. It is wonderful to share, a real pleasure.”

— Open Days Garden Host, Hancock, New Hampshire
GARDEN SELECTION CRITERIA

Open Days gardens should be more than two years old, exhibit a reasonable standard of maintenance, and possess one or more of the following characteristics:

• unity and harmony in design
• strong and distinctive elements within the design
• appropriateness of the design in relation to its setting and surrounding landscape
• particularly effective or innovative use of the site or plantings
• interesting and/or unusual collection of plants
• aesthetic groupings of plants
• unique intermingling of plants and/or colors, textures, etc.
• aspects that educate, enlighten, and inspire the visitor
• ecologically-sound design and maintenance techniques

SUBMITTING IMAGES OF THE GARDENS

Photographs of each garden must be submitted for review before we include the garden in Open Days. Whether you take them during your site visits, or Garden Hosts have them to submit, we prefer to receive images as digital files. Please contact our office with any questions about how to submit image files.

DATE SELECTION & THE GARDEN INFORMATION FORM

Once we have decided to include a group of gardens into the Open Days Program, a date (or dates) must be selected for them to open to the public.

Your Garden Hosts will need to complete the Garden Information Form. This form asks for each Host to indicate their preferred open date/s. We encourage you to work with them in order to coordinate the dates of gardens in close proximity. Our visitors can then enjoy making a day out of visiting your selected gardens. We will be happy to assist in this process.

MARKETING & PUBLICITY

We work hard to secure press coverage for each Open Day. Promotion of Open Days is typically coordinated through our office. We conduct a press campaign (with your consultation) and produce posters, postcards, and flyers. We will rely on volunteers to distribute these materials locally. As there are numerous untapped avenues to promote your Open Day, we are eager to work with you on new ideas and opportunities.

WELCOMING VISITORS

Many Garden Hosts find meeting visitors to be the most rewarding part of their Open Day. We encourage you, as the Regional Representative, to visit all of your recruited gardens during their Open Day to check in on your Hosts and to meet their visitors.

COLLECTING ADMISSIONS

Each Garden Host is responsible for collecting admissions at their garden. Visitors will pay a cash admission fee or remit a pre-paid ticket for admission to each garden. The Garden Conservancy cannot provide staff or volunteers for this purpose. Although we encourage Garden Hosts to enlist friends or family to help in greeting visitors, we advise you to have a plan for volunteers at your gardens.

GARDEN WELCOME KIT

Two weeks prior to the Open Day, we will send each Garden Host a Garden Welcome Kit that includes Volunteer and Garden Host Instructions, an admission box, name tags, signs to place at major intersections, parking signs, a guest register, Garden Conservancy information, and an admission report form.

THAT'S IT!

Over the years, Regional Representatives have surprised us with their innovative approach to organizing tours locally. We look forward to working with you to present an Open Day that is fun and educational for everyone involved. We are eager to hear your suggestions and comments as you begin recruiting gardens.

THANK YOU!

The Garden Conservancy’s Open Days Program
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