Celebrating 25 Years of Open Days

All gardens, from a window box to a vast urban park, are symbols of hope and renewal, express creativity and passion, and provide us all occasion for learning and reflection. Open Days, the Garden Conservancy’s flagship educational program, celebrates our country’s gardens and gardeners, horticulture and horticulturists, and garden design and garden designers. It connects people to nature, fellow gardeners, and the act of gardening. We believe wholeheartedly in the transformative power of gardens. The more we grow and strengthen a culture of gardening, the more positive is our impact on the world. And it starts with the simple act of opening a garden gate.

This year, Open Days is celebrating 25 years of bringing people together in a rich array of private gardens across the country. To date, more than 1.35 million Open Days visitors have experienced over 4,000 of America’s most inspiring private gardens in 41 states. Talk about transformative potential!

As we all do around any anniversary or milestone, we find ourselves thinking about Open Days in a broad context. We want to share a few of our thoughts on why we believe Open Days is so important, what we work to achieve year after year, and where we hope to go with our Open Days community moving forward. Some of these observations on “Why Open Days?” are the immediate and often tangible things we all notice and experience during a fabulous day of garden visiting. Others are the bigger, less immediate, and perhaps more profound ways that exploring and thinking about gardens impact us over time.

Teaching and Inspiring Each Other

In 1997, author Michael Pollan predicted that Open Days would become an institution doing “more for horticultural cross-fertilization than anything to hit the American garden scene since, well, the bumblebee.” We think Michael was right. Today, Open Days is a nationwide community of gardeners and garden enthusiasts teaching and inspiring each other, in an open, democratic exchange.

A source of comfort, joy, and wellness, gardens are especially important in times of uncertainty.

The Garden Conservancy has planned many wonderful programs this season and we will present as many as possible. Out of concern for our community, all Open Days and other educational programs through June 1 have been canceled; we are working to reschedule them next year or, where possible, later this year. We will continue working with our garden hosts and other partners to determine the best path forward, understanding that constraints may be different in different parts of the country.
From the President

It is incredible how the world has changed! Just a few short weeks ago we were gathering with Conservancy members and friends in a full auditorium at the beautiful Norton Museum of Art in West Palm Beach to hear Alexandre de Vogüé speak about the history and future of his remarkable family home, Vaux-le-Vicomte, and its iconic gardens outside of Paris. Last September we met Alexandre with a group of Fellows at Vaux and heard from him about an unexpected horticultural disaster: a double onslaught of a caterpillar and a fungus that were decimating the boxwoods that form the core of Vaux’s historic and much-photographed gardens.

One by one, Alexandre’s other three talks for the Conservancy, scheduled for three other cities, were canceled as the seriousness of the pandemic became clearer. Our exciting plans for a vibrant 2020 season began to recede, with immediate concerns for the health and wellbeing of our families and friends rightfully taking priority in all our minds.

Now more than ever, I am reminded that the Garden Conservancy is so unique—and so important—because it is not a place, or a series of events, or an urgent preservation project, or even just our beloved Open Days program. The Conservancy is an idea—a series of common beliefs shared by a passionate, informed, and unusual community of individuals who believe that gardening and gardens matter.

I firmly believe as gardeners—as members of this special community—we share special knowledge. Chiefly we know that gardening is experimental. Whether a novice or an experienced professional, we all enter the garden ready to greet the unexpected. Drought, infestation, hungry (and often very cute) vermin are just a few of the challenges that confront us when we presume to get creative with living things. I think that this experience and the skills acquired in coping with the unexpected, along with its related optimism, stand us in very good stead to meet and confront the current challenges that are spreading across the globe.

The staff of the Conservancy (gardeners all!) are well prepared to be creative and, yes, experimental with the ways in which we reach out to you, our members and friends, in the coming weeks and months. As our traditional ways of convening our community become difficult or even impossible, look for new formats with news and stories delivered in novel ways to remind us that gardens, and all that they represent, are more relevant than ever, reminding us of who we are, and reassuring us of who we will be.

Wishing you peace and good health,

James Brayton Hall
President and CEO
A Special Thanks to Our Donors to the Rheinstein Fund

The generous support of dozens of donors enabled us to raise over $350,000 (almost double our goal!) for the Suzanne and Frederic Rheinstein Fund for Garden Documentation, in conjunction with the Garden Conservancy holiday celebration in December. The holiday dinner honored renowned interior designer Suzanne Rheinstein, a member of our board of directors since 2004.

In March 2014, after an inspiring visit to the John P. Humes Japanese Stroll Garden in Mill Neck, NY, Suzanne created the Frederic Rheinstein Fund to honor her late husband while also supporting the preservation work of the Garden Conservancy. Moved by Fred’s illustrious career in television and media and by her own belief that gardens have the greatest impact when experienced firsthand, Suzanne envisioned a new, dynamic way of preserving gardens. From this vision, grew the Conservancy’s Documentation Program, creating new documentary film footage as well as organizing a wealth of historical archival materials. For those gardens whose significance is undeniable, film documentation offers another way for us to preserve these fragile, remarkable spaces for future generations.

Now renamed the Suzanne and Frederic Rheinstein Fund for Garden Documentation, the fund will enable us to document these vital resources. We plan to add more film highlights on our website soon and to share them online.

The John P. Humes Japanese Stroll Garden, Mill Neck, NY

In Memoriam

We were saddened to hear that Jack Staub, of Wrightstown, PA, and Manalapan, FL, died January 22, 2020. Together with his partner, Renny Reynolds, Jack was the creator of Hortulus Farm Garden and Nursery—an affiliate garden of the Garden Conservancy since 2014—and a longtime Open Days regional ambassador and garden host and friend of the Garden Conservancy. In January, Timber Press had just released the latest book by Jack, Chasing Eden: Design Inspirations from the Gardens at Hortulus Farm, written in collaboration with Renny, with photographs by Rob Cardillo.

On March 17, John Gaston Fairey, the creator of the John Fairey Garden (formerly known as Peckerwood Garden) in Hempstead, TX, died at the age of 89 years. In 1998, the Garden Conservancy helped to create a foundation to make his garden a public garden. Read more about John Fairey and his garden in this issue on page 13.

On March 29, Patrice de Vogüé died in Vaux, outside of Paris, France. The fourth generation to own Vaux-le-Vicomte, the historic château that inspired the design of Versailles, Patrice opened the château to the public in 1968 and dedicated 50 years of his life to its restoration and refurbishment. The château is now owned and managed by his three sons, including Alexandre, who presented a Speaker Series talk for the Garden Conservancy this year in early March, before the global health crisis forced three further presentations to be canceled. We hope to have Alexandre return to speak for us again in the future.

Membership: We’re Growing!

Our members are an essential part of our community. We could not achieve all we do without you!

Last year we welcomed over 700 new members from 33 states. Thank you for joining us.

To update members on member benefits associated with the Open Days season: If your membership was active as of March 5, you should have received a free copy of our 2020 Open Days Directory. Directories for newer members will be sent as soon as possible once our office reopens. We also anticipate sending members’ complimentary Open Days tickets in the coming weeks, as we learn more about the upcoming season.

We hope to distribute your benefits in the near future. Should you have any questions about your membership, its benefits, or your current membership status, please contact our membership department at membership@gardenconservancy.org.

100 Lessons in the Art of the Garden

Garden Design Master Class: 100 Lessons From the World’s Finest Designers on the Art of the Garden, edited by Carl Dellatore, is being published by Rizzoli in April. The book brings together essays by 100 landscape architects and garden designers reflecting on universal gardening questions, illustrated with photos of each designer’s work. The contributors include several dozen Garden Conservancy members, Open Days garden hosts and regional ambassadors, and board members, as well as speakers at our events. The essay topics range from “height” (Peter Bevacqua) and “form” (Kathryn Herman) in the garden, to the use of stone (Elizabeth Everdell) and the role of creativity (James deGrey David). The preface of the book includes commentary by James Brayton Hall on early essays about American garden design by Thomas Jefferson and Edith Wharton.

We plan to feature Carl Dellatore in our Speaker Series this fall, together with some of the individual essayists.

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Michael Pollan isn’t the only one to recognize that Open Days can do wonders for cross-pollination. In 2015, the Garden Conservancy was awarded the Wilfred J. Jung Distinguished Service Medal by Garden Communicators International (formerly known as the Garden Writers Association) for our Open Days program. This medal recognizes organizations that are promoting gardening in North America and expanding the communication of ideas about horticulture, agriculture, gardening, natural systems, and the environment.

People regularly tell us about the friends they make and the enthusiasm they feel at Open Days. Those who open their gardens for other groups report that Open Days visitors are distinctive because they are genuinely curious and courteous. Getting out, exploring gardens, seeing new places, sharing ideas, meeting new people, and frankly, having fun—all of this fuels America’s passion for gardens. We’d be thrilled with that as the end result because the world always needs more joy and more gardeners. But something else extraordinary also happens through Open Days: many people become advocates for garden preservation. A key part of the Garden Conservancy’s mission is garden preservation. We know that people work to save what they value. All of the green love that Open Days generates inspires stewardship. People who are truly passionate about gardens, like members of the Open Days community, are far more likely to step up and work as active champions of our living environment and landscape heritage.

Many of our 2020 Open Days and other educational programs illustrate how our nationwide community of gardeners and garden enthusiasts will be teaching and inspiring each other. Renowned plant experts will share their various horticultural passions in 2020 Digging Deeper programs. Open Days and a range of special programs this year will also explore distinctive garden visions. For example, on June 20 in Millerton, NY, architect Larry Wente will welcome Digging Deeper guests to “Rooted in Place: An Architect’s Garden in the Country.” He will share the ideas that make his Hyland/Wente garden such a memorable success, including how he created an easy flow between house and garden, as well as between the garden and the larger agrarian landscape. On June 27, professional horticulturists George and Marcia Chapman are scheduled to host a Digging Deeper in their remarkable half-acre garden in East Falmouth on Cape Cod, MA. During “A Small Space with a Big Feel,” discover the Chapmans’ simple yet effective design ideas that can be applied in gardens of any scale in any location. James Golden’s Federal Twist is a densely planted naturalistic landscape that Monty Don, the celebrity host of the BBC’s series Gardeners’ World, recently described as “one of the best gardens I have ever visited anywhere in the world.” This garden in Stockton, NJ, near Bucks County, PA, is scheduled to open to visitors for Open Days this year on both July 18 and October 24.

A Nationwide Community of Garden Lovers at Work
Fortunately, some of the tremendous passion fueled by Open Days flows back to Open Days itself. This program is made possible thanks to the hard work and generous support of hundreds of volunteers around the country. By crowd-sourcing ideas, energy, time, and expertise, our tiny staff in New York’s Hudson Valley is able to spearhead a powerful garden movement coast to coast.

An important example of Open Days synergy is our work with nonprofit partners. We collaborate with like-minded local and regional nonprofits—including public gardens, museums, historic sites, horticultural organizations, and other cultural institutions—to create Open Days in their areas. Our partners identify great local gardens, coordinate the date and volunteers, and work with us to publicize the event locally. The Garden Conservancy publicizes these Open Days in our printed Open Days Directory (6,000 copies), on our website (35,000 unique page views a month), in reminder emails (20,000 subscribers nationwide), on Instagram (more than 34,000...
followers), and Facebook (an audience of 80,000), as well as with media releases and various online calendar listings. We respond to questions about these Open Days from the public, sell tickets, insure the events, and provide essential materials like signage. Our national reputation and the local and regional reputations of our partners complement each other and build increased attendance. Many Open Days visitors regularly travel quite broadly to participate and our partners often have strong local constituencies. The same national and local synergy often results in increased press coverage. We also share proceeds from these collaborative Open Days, supporting the mission of the Garden Conservancy as well as those of our nonprofit partners in their local communities.

Why Open Days? Because together, garden lovers and garden enthusiasts really can be a collective force for positive change. If you’d like to learn more about getting involved as an individual or nonprofit partner, please send us an email at opendays@gardenconservancy.org or give us a call at 845.424.6502.

This year, we are pleased to collaborate with three new Open Days nonprofit partners. Blithewold Mansion, Gardens and Arboretum, in Bristol, RI, is working with us on a June 20 Open Day. It includes a Digging Deeper program, “Landscape in Translation: Arts and Crafts Ideals in the 21st Century,” a look at their historic site led by architectural historian John Tschirch and Blithewold horticulturists Fred Perry and Gail Read. Rhode Island’s Southside Community Land Trust has organized an Open Day in Providence that features a Digging Deeper, “Growing Food and Community: An Urban Farm to Table Celebration” at the land trust’s City Farm on June 27. Digging Deeper participants will enjoy an interactive cooking demonstration and explore the educational City Farm, as well as the larger work of the Southside Community Land Trust to create sustainable and equitable community food systems. The Milwaukee Art Museum Garden Club has curated an extraordinary Open Day that includes a Garden Masters Series program, “Historic Art and Gardens in Wisconsin—the Chipstone Foundation,” on August 1. Chipstone works to foster a deep understanding of early American culture. Not normally open to the public, this remarkable campus’s sympathetically designed architecture and gardens enhance the appreciation of one of the world’s finest collections of American decorative arts and create a setting for cutting edge scholarship.

Every year we also work with a range of returning nonprofit partners. For Open Days on July 11 and August 8 in the Ithaca, NY, area, our partner since 2004 has been the Tompkins County Community Beautification Program. Our September 13 Litchfield...
County, CT, Open Day partner is Hollister House Garden, also a Garden Conservancy preservation partner, in Washington, CT. We have collaborated with Hollister House Garden on Open Days since 2008. Innisfree, a public garden in Millbrook, NY, has been working with Open Days since 2016. This year, Innisfree is our partner for four Open Days in Dutchess County, NY.

Experiences Both Unique and Universal
Creating and experiencing gardens is at once intensely personal and universal. We each have our own preferences and practices, our own goals and visions. How these come together with the particulars of a given site—climate, topography, scale, exposure—to create a garden is nothing short of alchemy. Each garden is unique, as is the story it tells. But taken together, these individual stories become the story of people and places and eras, the story of our culture. Each experience of each garden is also unique. You see your own garden every day, but a sudden change in the light can reveal new perspectives. The sights, sounds, feelings, and fragrances of gardens take root in our memories like nothing else. While the specifics differ, the potency and poignancy of life in a garden, of life with gardens, is something that members of the Garden Conservancy and our Open Days community already share. We want more people to share this joy.

Part of our answer to “Why Open Days?” is that we want you to look, to really see and be inspired by the unique and the universal in gardens. Only Open Days lets people explore private gardens from coast to coast, a “Grand Tour” of gardens, so to speak. These inspired private landscapes range from urban rooftops to organic farms, historic estates to innovative suburban lots. Looking at gardens in this broad context opens a vast array of specific ideas and inspirations. It also encourages a reading of the national landscape, highlights the role of gardens as fundamental cultural expressions, and enables diverse regional stories to emerge.

To aid in planning your own 2020 Grand Tour of gardens, here’s a small sampling of Open Days and various special programs happening around the country this season. On June 20, we welcome a new region in the Philadelphia area with gardens in Montgomery County, PA. On the same day but across the country, Washington State checks in, with an Open Day on Bainbridge Island, including plantsman Dan Hinkley’s Windcliff. Another island, Martha’s Vineyard, MA, will show off its distinctive style with a July 11 Open Day, including a Digging Deeper, “A Summer Seaside Garden,” led by garden designer Nan Sinton and focusing on the special challenges of gardening on the coast. Inland, you can explore gardens along Chicago’s North Shore on July 26 and wrap up the 2020 Open Days season inspired by seven gardens in San Antonio, TX, on October 24.

Three Open Days weekends promise to be special blockbusters this year. The first, on June 27 and 28 in Litchfield County, CT, and Berkshire County, MA, will feature a total of ten gardens, including some of Open Days visitors’ most beloved gardens (such as those of Bunny Williams, Lee Link, Barbara Paul Robinson, Michael Trapp, and Linda Allard) as well as stunning additions such as Page Dickey’s garden at Church House, her new home in Falls Village, CT.

A second blockbuster weekend is planned along the border in southern New Hampshire and Vermont in mid-July. It kicks off with a Digging Deeper on Friday, July 17, “Medieval Vermont: Creating an Ancient Property,” in a stunning garden (complete with 21st-century “Celtic ruins”) created by owners Susan and Rick Richter and acclaimed stone artist Dan Snow. Saturday, July 18, begins with an early Digging Deeper, “Bunker Farm Plants,” with the garden designer and specialty grower Helen O’Donnell. Working at Great Dixter in England, she discovered a passion for unusual plants and came away with the understanding that great gardens depend on well-grown plants. Saturday is filled with tremendous Open Days gardens to enjoy, and
closes with another Digging Deeper in the early evening hosted by garden designer, preservationist, and former Garden Conservancy preservation director Bill Noble and designer Susan Howard. “Spirit of Place” will explore the themes in Bill’s forthcoming book on the making of his garden, to be published by Timber Press in late May. Sunday, July 19, focuses on fabulous gardens in Peterborough, NH, and includes a Digging Deeper, “An Artist’s Garden: A Living Tapestry,” exploring a deeply personal vision with Maude Odgers, a plant collector with an eye for the unusual.

A third blockbuster Open Days weekend, July 25 and 26, features a roster of important gardens celebrating the distinctive native landscape and history of coastal Massachusetts. That Saturday, explore three gardens along the South Coast, below Boston and Cape Cod. Gardener and plant collector Anne Almy has respectfully reworked a farm that has been in her husband’s family since the 1700s. Designer Nan Sinton’s own garden, never open to the public before, was once a rocky patch of poison ivy but is now her living design laboratory. A nearby garden of Nan’s design, also never open previously, successfully marries the idea of a private oasis with a sense of adventure and discovery inspired by local maritime traditions. Nan will host a Digging Deeper, “Shaping Space,” in the latter garden, once flat and open but now a sequence of spaces, ones encouraging active discovery or complete relaxation. That Sunday, head north to Marblehead for another tour de force, from tiny retreats to historic estates, along with several remarkable and early modernist residences. Grey Gulls is an ode to the sinuous curves of shore and rock as well as the unique horticultural possibilities (and limitations) of this exposed oceanfront site.

Seaside Farm is a two-acre waterfront remnant of an estate once owned by Francis and Louise du Pont Crowninshield. When the current owners discovered this rich history, they set about restoring the gardens to capture the original feeling as much as possible.

Healthy Gardens, Healthy People, Healthy Planet
As gardeners and garden enthusiasts, we personally know what scientists and doctors have been discovering: living things are all connected, small changes can have a big impact, plants are essential to the health of our planet (and of people!), and that being fully present and observing things like change over time in the landscape—call that mindfulness or gardening—makes us healthier and more resilient as individuals and a society. Visiting gardens and talking to fellow garden lovers during Open Days is healthy in and of itself. Open Days combines the intellectual stimulation, physical experiences, and direct social interactions that keep us vibrant throughout life. An increasing body of science, along with a millennia of traditional health practices, show that humans, from children to seniors, experience measurable benefits from being outside in nature, boosting immunity, mood, focus, confidence, and curiosity. Think of the Japanese practice of shinrin-yoku (forest bathing) or the impassioned and data-driven urgings of author and naturalist Richard Louv, environmental activist George Monbiot, and others to spend more time in nature.

Why Open Days? We celebrate the critical role of gardeners as stewards of our planet. The choices we make in our gardens—from selecting more native species and modifying watering habits to using more natural soil-enhancement and

Seaside gardens along both the Atlantic and Pacific coasts are scheduled to be featured this year. Grey Gulls (below, left) in Marblehead, MA, will open on July 26 as part of a blockbuster weekend on coastal Massachusetts and Sam and Karen Brindley’s garden (below, right) on Bainbridge Island, WA, will open on June 20.

GREY GULLS PHOTO BY MARION BRENNER
mulching techniques—have a profound impact on the ecological health of our own plots of land and the Earth overall. Open Days endorses and encourages nature-friendly garden management and is working to actively engage the Open Days community in this cause. Starting next year, we will invite Open Days hosts to pledge their commitment to being good environmental stewards and we will recognize those who do in Open Days materials.

We have always worked to foster the exchange of knowledge and experiences relating to best practices in gardens, including nature-friendly ecological strategies. In 1995, our first Open Days season, native plant pioneer Sara Stein, the author of, among other books, *Noah’s Garden: Restoring the Ecology of Our Own Back Yards* (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 1993), shared with visitors both her groundbreaking ideas and landmark garden. After her death in 2005, this Pound Ridge, NY, garden was purchased by Ellen and James Best, who continue to maintain the garden according to the Sara Stein’s ecological principles. They plan to participate in Open Days this year on July 26; a Digging Deeper program at their garden will explore the role of local “ecotypes,” distinct forms of plant species that develop in response to local conditions, and how backyard gardeners can help conserve biodiversity.

In her garden, Jardin de Buis, in Pottersville, NJ, landscape architect and nurserywoman Andrea Filippone utilizes closed loop composting, grows a wide variety of disease-resistant boxwood cultivars, is working with scientists to solve issues caused by boxwood blight, and happily shares all of this information with visitors. When she married Eric “T” Fleisher, a horticulturist renowned for advancing organic practices, they started a consultancy in sustainable landscape management and landscape design. Together they share information through Open Days, including compost tea workshops. This year, their garden is scheduled to open on September 19.

Growing healthy food is integral to many longtime Open Days gardens. **Be it for a healthy meal or a healthy planet,** we want members of the Open Days community to know that a single gardener can make a world of difference.

A wonderfully rich roster of programs scheduled for 2020 offer information on small but effective steps we all can take. On June 13 in Oakland, CA, join designer and stoneworker Andrea Hurd for a Digging Deeper on “Fusing Art and Ecology: Dry-Stacked Stone Walls.” On July 12 in Santa Monica, CA, landscape designer Pam Bottaro and organic landscape contractor Sheri Powell will lead a Digging Deeper on “Monarchs in Your Garden.”

Want to learn more about growing glorious, healthy, and of course beautiful food? On June 27, at Rivermere, her home in Croton-on-Hudson, NY, Indira Rajan will distill ancient holistic practices for healthy present-day living in a Digging Deeper, “Simple Ways to Grow and Use Ayurvedic Herbs.” On June 28, explore “Unusual Edibles—Treasures for Garden and Table” in a Digging Deeper with Alyson Levy and Scott Serrano at Hortus Arboretum and Botanical Garden in Stone Ridge, NY. Join horticulturist Andrew Koehn for a Digging Deeper, “A Chef’s Garden in the Catskills,” on July 25 in the garden he created for a locavore restaurant and boutique hotel in Hunter, NY. Or, that same day in California, join Garden Conservancy board member and blogger (The Blissful Gardeners) Carolyn Mehran for an unprecedented glimpse of her and her husband’s garden in a Digging Deeper on “A Year-Round Vegetable Garden in Napa.” In Chappaqua, NY, on July 26, Shobha Vanchiswar and Murali Mani will share techniques for growing superior fruit in tight spaces in a Digging Deeper on “Wilding Walls, Fruiting Fences.” On August 28, Open Days stalwart Bunny Williams will share her Falls Village, CT, garden during late summer—for the first time—when her vegetable garden is at its lush peak for a Digging Deeper, “Bunny Williams on Vegetable Garden Style.”

**JOIN THE CONVERSATION!** Let’s keep the green ideas flowing in person, in the garden, and online. Celebrate the first 25 years of Open Days and kick off the next by sharing your own Open Days stories, photographs, and musings on social media with our special anniversary hashtag, #opendays25, or by email to opendays25@gardenconservancy.org.
2020 Speaker Series

As we move forward with the Garden Conservancy's 2020 Speaker Series, we are fortunate to have a lot both to celebrate and to anticipate. We kicked off our annual series early this year with four talks in four cities in February and one in March before the arrival of COVID-19 forced cancellations of other spring programs. We also have some great programs in planning for later this year.

Aaron Bertelsen, author of *Grow Fruit & Vegetables in Pots: Growing Advice and Recipes from Great Dixter* (Phaidon, 2020) and the vegetable gardener at Christopher Lloyd's extraordinary Great Dixter in East Sussex, UK, spoke for the Garden Conservancy in Pottersville, NJ; San Antonio, TX; and Los Angeles and San Francisco, CA. Aaron's message is particularly timely: everyone can grow something. You can participate in your own food system, no matter how much or how little land you have. You can grow fruits, vegetables, and herbs in spaces as small as a windowsill. Special thanks to longtime Open Days hosts Janet Mavec and Wayne Nordberg for hosting Aaron in New Jersey, to the San Antonio Botanical Garden for partnering with us for what we anticipate will be the first of many successful collaborations, to chef Jill Davie and the team at the Mar Vista in Los Angeles for presenting a fun and memorable event at the restaurant, and to Alex and Carolyn Mehran for hosting a lovely program in their home in San Francisco. We were also honored to work with Phaidon as a national sponsor of Aaron's American book tour. More than ever, we're leveraging our national Speaker Series to build community, to engage new people with the work of the Garden Conservancy, and to create a national dialogue supporting the horticultural topics that are important and timely.

In March, we held the first of four scheduled talks featuring Alexandre de Vogüé, the fifth-generation proprietor of the 17th-century baroque Château de Vaux-le-Vicomte in Maincy, France. The château, perhaps the most historically important private house in France, was designed by the same architect, landscape architect, and artist trio who were later commissioned to design Versailles. Originally designed by André le Nôtre, the gardens featured boxwood parterres that have been ravaged recently by box blight and boxwood moth. The parterres, fountains (once gravity-fed), and other parts of the landscape serve as case studies on how to approach the philosophical and practical challenges of garden preservation. In early March, Alexandre spoke in West Palm Beach, FL, thanks to the gracious hosting of the Norton Museum of Art. We were disappointed to cancel the other three programs in Alexandre's tour due to the pandemic, but we hope to bring him back to the United States in the future and to resume our educational programming partnerships with the Preservation Society of Charleston, SC; Filoli in Woodside, CA; and the Morgan Library & Museum in New York City.

We also look forward to presenting our fall headline speaker, Carl Dellatore, editor of the forthcoming book *Garden Design Master Class: 100 Lessons from the World's Finest Designers on the Art of the Garden* (Rizzoli, April 2020). His book features essays by prominent garden designers, horticulturists, and authors on all facets of gardening, from experimentation (Benjamin Lenhardt) and asymmetry (Jorge Sánchez) to birds (Christopher Spitzmiller) and self-seeding plants (Page Dickey). Many of the contributors are connected to the Garden Conservancy as Open Days hosts, past speakers, board members, and members of our Society of Fellows. We anticipate that Carl, together with some of the essay contributors, will speak for us in many locations as we partner with Rizzoli to sponsor his national book tour. We also are working with several other speakers on individual presentations in cities across the country. Look for schedule information in our upcoming emails and on our website.

Landscape designed by Andrea Cochran, illustrating her essay on “Space.” Photo from *Garden Design Master Class: 100 Lessons from the World's Finest Designers on the Art of the Garden* (Rizzoli, April 2020), edited by Carl Dellatore
Preservation Department to Moderate APGA Panel: Telling the Whole Story

We are delighted that a panel discussion conceived and developed by Garden Conservancy preservation staff has been accepted by the American Public Garden Association (APGA) for this year’s annual conference in mid-June. The topic is “Telling the Whole Story: Using an inclusive interpretation of gardens and historic landscapes to reach a broader and more diverse audience.” Speakers will discuss how their organizations are developing programs and educational materials to convey a complete picture of their gardens’ historic connections to issues of race and social justice.

Peggy Cornett, of the Thomas Jefferson Institute and Monticello’s Historic Gardener and Curator of Plants, will discuss how Monticello has undertaken a series of initiatives to more accurately portray the role of Thomas Jefferson as a slave owner and the history of the enslaved men and women on his estate. Peggy was included in Jennifer Jewell’s recently published book, The Earth in her Hands: 75 Extraordinary Women Working in the World of Plants (Timber Press, March 2020).

Shaun Spencer-Hester, director of the Anne Spencer House and Garden Museum, will discuss the legacy of her grandmother’s poetry and social activism during the Harlem Renaissance in the 1920s and how the museum uses the legacy to educate new generations and forge new connections within its community in Lynchburg, VA.

Sara Gordon is managing a master planning process for the Sylvester Manor Educational Farm on Shelter Island in eastern Long Island, NY. A Native American hunting and fishing ground, Sylvester Manor, since 1652, has been home to eleven generations of its original European settler family, who relied on the labor of African slaves and European indentured servants for many years. The last slave was freed in 1820. Now a nonprofit organization, Sylvester Manor has undertaken a great deal of archival and archeological research to document the legacy of the native, African, and European inhabitants. Sara will talk about the programming and interpretation being developed for the site and its landscape.

Following the speakers’ presentations, Pamela Governale, the Conservancy’s director of preservation, and Anne Welles, associate director of preservation, will moderate a panel discussion to explore how public gardens and historic sites tell the often-fraught story of our shared cultural heritage.

The APGA, a leading professional organization for the field of public horticulture, offers educational and networking opportunities, including an annual conference, for its members throughout North America.

Central Pool Renovated at the Ruth Bancroft Garden

During much of 2019, the middle of the Ruth Bancroft Garden in Walnut Creek, CA, was torn up and unsightly while the central pool, a key element of the garden's design, underwent major reconstruction. Garden curator Brian Kemble, who worked closely with Ruth for many years, says she was never happy with the way the stones were set around the pool’s rim, since the concrete between them was too visible. In addition, the pool's depth was insufficient to keep out herons, which arrived from time to time to terrorize the fish. To make things right, Brian and his team enlisted the help of Rick Driemeyer, a specialist in garden water features. Rick deepened the pool, ringed it with natural-looking stones, and created a short waterway which cascades down through rocks and spills into the pool. Improvements were also made to the pool’s circulation system.

During the construction, it was necessary to remove many plants around the perimeter of the pool. The horticultural staff kept them alive and well during the construction work, and now everything is back in place. The plants are filling in nicely. Brian reports, “It is a great relief to have addressed this long-standing need at the garden, in a manner consistent with what we feel Ruth would have done if she were still with us.” For more information, visit ruthbancroftgarden.org.

The Garden Conservancy provides preservation assistance to the Ruth Bancroft Garden and holds a conservation easement on the property.

Totally renovated, the Ruth Bancroft Garden’s new central pool and its refreshed plantings bring it closer to the original feature as planned by Ruth Bancroft.
Garden Transformation Underway at Greenwood Gardens

Major construction and renovation projects at Greenwood Gardens in Short Hills, NJ, began in July 2019 and are scheduled to be unveiled to the public in September. Visitors will enjoy a new, streamlined entry sequence; ample parking; renovated, historic water features; restored historic views; and new plantings throughout the heart of the garden. The additional seating will allow guests to linger and enjoy sweeping vistas, sparkling pools, gardens, and statuary.

A new, sustainable rain garden filled with moisture-tolerant perennials, ornamental grasses, trees, and shrubs was completed last fall. This feature will minimize the environmental impact of rainwater runoff by increasing the garden's ability to temporarily hold and absorb storm water. A new parking lot, surrounded by mature woods and new plantings, will be completed in early spring, tripling the former capacity.

The garden's main axis, including the Reflecting Pool Terrace, Croquet Lawn, and Garden of the Gods, has been redesigned based on the garden's twentieth-century designs. On the Reflecting Pool Terrace, abundant flower beds will encircle the renovated D-shaped pool and its three leaping dolphin sculptures. The boxwood hedges crossing the heart of the Croquet Lawn have been removed because of concerns about boxwood blight. The pool in the Garden of the Gods will feature an “emerald necklace” of naturalistic woodland plantings.

Beginning Sunday, September 13, 2020, Greenwood Gardens plans to be open every Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Visitation will be via timed tickets, which can be purchased in advance on greenwoodgardens.org after August 1. To learn more, visit greenwoodgardens.org/garden-transformation-underway or email info@greenwoodgardens.org.

Greenwood Gardens is a preservation partner of the Garden Conservancy.
Francis Hoppin: The Man Behind the Plan for Blithewood Garden

An important part of the behind-the-scenes work of preservation is researching and interpreting historic information to guide how we approach a rehabilitation. For the rehabilitation of Blithewood Garden, in Annandale-on-Hudson, NY, this research is a particularly important now, as design drawings for the repair of the garden are being developed and as Bard College and the Garden Conservancy prepare to raise funds for the project. Every garden has a story, and a garden that is 117 years old has lots to tell! Starting at the beginning is always a good idea, so let’s take a look at the “man behind the plan” for the garden: Francis Laurens Vinton Hoppin (1866 – 1941).

Hoppin received his degree in architecture from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1888, then studied at the École des Beaux Arts in Paris. On his return to the United States, he joined the prestigious architectural firm of McKim, Mead & White.

Hoppin set up his own practice in 1894 with fellow McKim, Mead & White designer, Terrence Koen. At the turn of the new century, the firm was hired by Captain Andrew Zabriskie to design a suitably grand mansion and garden for his Hudson Valley estate, Blithewood. Hoppin & Koehn also designed The Mount, in Lenox, MA, for Edith Wharton, as well as Ashintully, in Tyringham, MA (where the Garden Conservancy provided preservation assistance in 1997). In 1923 Hoppin retired as an architect to pursue a successful second career as an artist. His 1893 watercolor of the Brooklyn Museum (designed by McKim, Mead & White) is part of the museum’s permanent collection. Many of his works were scenes from his travels, and vistas of his native Rhode Island, where he and his wife (who was president of the Newport Garden Club) were part of Newport’s “summer colony.”

Hoppin passed away in 1941, but we think he would have enjoyed knowing that Blithewood's beauty and serenity continue to offer retreat to visitors and fresh inspiration for contemporary artists, as it did last fall during a popular plein air painting event, Garden Open House & Paint Out, held during the Hudson Valley Ramble.

* “Talks with Architects: Mr. F.L.V Hoppin on the House and garden” in Scientific American Building Monthly (35, no 3, March 1903, pp. 47-61)

GCNN Spring Workshop to be Rescheduled

The spring 2020 workshop of the Garden Conservancy Northwest Network (GCNN), originally planned for March 19 – 20 at the Oregon Garden in Silverton, OR, is being rescheduled. Member organizations of the GCNN will be notified by email as plans evolve.
Peckerwood Garden Renamed in Honor of Founder John Fairey

On March 10, 2020, the board of directors of the Peckerwood Garden Conservation Foundation voted to change the name of the garden to “The John Fairey Garden,” in honor of garden founder John Gaston Fairey. The foundation itself is now also known as “The John Fairey Garden Conservation Foundation.”

The John Fairey Garden, located near Hempstead, TX, is recognized internationally both for the originality of its garden design and as a repository of rare and endangered plants. The garden contains more than 4,000 plants from Mexico, the United States, and Asia, many of which were planted from seeds John Fairey collected in more than 100 botanizing expeditions to northeastern Mexico.

“Changing the name of such a beloved institution is not something to undertake lightly, but we felt changing it to honor John was only fitting, and his acceptance of the idea considerably lightened the weight of the decision,” said Randy Twaddle, president of the foundation’s board.

Just a week later, on March 17, John Fairey died at the age of 89 years. In 1971, John acquired seven acres along a creek near Hempstead, TX, and began the steadfast pursuit of his lifetime: the creation of Peckerwood Garden. John planned and began construction of what was to become a 39-acre property. The garden now exhibits almost 3,000 species of plants as it meanders along grassy paths, creating a landscape of surprising shapes, multiple textures, colors, and fragrances. Among John Fairey’s many accolades are the American Horticultural Award in 1996, which he shared with Carl Schoenfeld, for their botanizing expeditions to northeast Mexico; the 2013 Scott Medal and Award from Swarthmore College, PA, for his outstanding contribution to the science and art of gardening; in 2016, the American Horticultural Society’s highest honor, the Liberty Hyde Baily Award; and, also in 2016, the Foundation for Landscape Studies Place Maker Award. John will also receive the Garden Club of America’s Florence DeBevoisie Medal posthumously in May.

In 1998, Peckerwood Garden became a preservation project of the Garden Conservancy. With our assistance, the Peckerwood Garden Conservation Foundation was formed to operate the garden for the public and to identify and conserve threatened and disappearing native Mexican flora. The Garden Conservancy also assisted the Peckerwood Garden Conservation Foundation in public outreach and strategic planning for the garden’s future as a public garden and study center and, since 2017, holds a conservation easement on the property to protect it in perpetuity.

Below: Author, Garden Conservancy board member, and chair of the board’s Preservation Committee Susan Lowry and plantsman John Fairey at his garden in February 2018 and two views of the John Fairey Garden in Hempstead, TX
Hollister House Garden Prepares for the Season

A classic garden in the English manner, Hollister House Garden is informally planted in generous abundance around a loosely formal structure. Situated in the Litchfield hills of northwestern Connecticut, the garden has been open to the public since 2006. Now in its tenth year, Garden Study Weekend—two days of lectures, a Litchfield County Open Day and a rare plant sale—is cosponsored by Hollister House Garden and the Garden Conservancy. This popular event allows gardeners, both professional and amateur, to gather each September to hear new perspectives on horticulture and design.

This year the symposium will take place on Saturday, September 12, at the Heritage Hotel in Southbury, CT. The symposium will feature talks by celebrated landscape designer Deborah Nevins, advocate for seed saving and heirloom fruits and vegetables Amy Goldman Fowler, design professional and passionate gardener Bunny Williams, and horticulturalist Helen O’Donnell. The program also includes a conversation on creating gardens that reflect the “spirit of place” between garden writer and designer Page Dickey and garden designer and preservation professional Bill Noble. Page, a member of the boards of both the Garden Conservancy and Hollister House Garden, will also moderate the day’s symposium. On Sunday, September 13, Hollister House hosts its popular Sale of Rare and Unusual Plants and is one of the outstanding gardens you can visit on the Garden Conservancy’s Litchfield County Open Day.

For garden enthusiasts for whom once a year is not enough, Hollister broadened its program offerings with the Barn Talks series, which launched in 2018. Held on Saturday mornings in the spring and fall, these engaging talks provide inspiring presentations for those seeking to enhance their practical skills and gardening knowledge. Unfortunately, the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic has forced Hollister House Garden to cancel all Barn Talks (as well as other workshops) that were scheduled for April.

Future Barn Talk speakers include Andrea Filippone and Eric “T” Fleisher, principals of F² Environmental Design; Margaret Roach, journalist, author and blogger of A Way to Garden and Juliet Hubbard will talk about her garden, Coltsfoot, in Cornwall, CT, which has been featured in many magazines.

Hollister House Garden hopes to open to the public on Friday, April 24. As the current health pandemic continues to evolve, please visit hollisterhousegarden.org for additional information on Garden Study Weekend X and the most up-to-date information on other programs and events.

Frick Collection Plans for Courtyard Garden Move Ahead

In mid-March, as many projects and activities across the world were stalled, the restoration plans for the courtyard garden designed by Russell Page for the Frick Collection in New York City cleared an important hurdle. The New York City Board of Standards and Appeals unanimously approved the variances the Frick had requested, which will now permit it to realize the building renovation and enhancement project, including the restoration of the garden.

In recognition of the significance of this garden as a vital cultural artifact, the Garden Conservancy, along with other preservation organizations, submitted a letter of support in January. We endorsed the Frick Collection’s plans in concept, understanding that the Frick is committed to the preservation of the garden and provided that the garden is restored according to Russell Page’s original design. In 2018, we submitted an earlier letter of support of the plan when it went before the city’s Landmarks Preservation Commission, which also approved it. A copy of both letters can be viewed on our website.

Russell Page’s sketch for the courtyard garden at the Frick Collection in New York City. COURTESY OF THE GARDEN MUSEUM, LONDON
Archivist’s Corner

by Julia Cencebaugh Kloth, curator of archival collections at the Garden Conservancy

I began assembling the Garden Conservancy archives in early 2018. I still get all worked up about the role. Contrary to the idea that archives are old and dusty, archives CAN be sexy and exciting. Many stories of place making and the struggles of preservation are captured within the archives.

Part of the excitement stems from the richness of the Garden Conservancy’s collection, which represents the collective memory of the Conservancy and the hundred and some gardens the organization has encouraged and assisted over the years. The archives include oversized designs, plant lists, personal ephemera belonging to the garden’s creators, magazines, newspapers, letters, drawings, prints, photos, films, and sound recordings.

It’s not just official records, but also private creative pursuits, that define the cultural legacy of American gardening. Our gardening tradition is extremely individualistic within the United States, due in part to our country being so vast and diverse in both geography and climate. As gardeners in this country, we tend to forge our own individual paths or follow more regional traditions. The archives contain many clues of things that define the art and practice of American gardening.

I believe these materials are going to be a bonanza for scholars and students of American landscape design. But documents only get exciting when they become part of a story. For example, there was treason and espionage at Dumbarton Oaks in Washington, DC, a lush landscape designed by Beatrix Farrand in the early twentieth century. In July 1984, Jonathan Pollard, a former U.S. intelligence analyst and spy for Israel, conducted a clandestine meeting with his Israeli handler on a bench in the gardens of the Dumbarton Oaks. In that idyllic setting, the two men walked to Forsythia Hill, the exact spot the Garden Conservancy would later also help restore in 1997, where they negotiated the pay Pollard would receive for classified documents. Pollard later also received a life sentence for his espionage.

Perhaps if the Garden Conservancy’s archive had been accessible at that time, Pollard could have understood the garden’s motto, spelled out in the stones of the pebbled pond: Quod Severis Metes, translating to “What you sow, also shall you reap.”

At Gaiety Hollow, a Tool Shed is a Historic Structure

The tool shed at Gaiety Hollow, the home and office of the all-woman landscape architecture firm of Elizabeth Lord and Edith Schryver in Salem, OR, was recently restored by the Lord & Schryver Conservancy. Over time, the 85-year-old wooden shed had rotted at the base (the original framing was set right on the dirt!), the paint was peeling, and the slab foundation had cracked.

Because the Gaiety Hollow property and structures are listed on the National Register of Historic Places, the shed needed to be restored rather than built anew. Funding was secured from the Oregon Community Foundation and the Kinsman Foundation. The project followed the standards of the US Secretary of the Interior for the treatment of historic landscapes. Restoration work began by carefully bracing the shed, which was then lifted by a large crane and set aside in the adjacent Reserve Garden area for safekeeping. Next, the original broken concrete slab floor was replaced, and new concrete walls and footings were added. Then the shed was picked up and carefully repositioned on the new concrete base. Decayed siding was replaced, but it was possible to retain the original door and repaint it.

The tool shed restoration project took one month to complete. By January 25, the tool shed and the Reserve Garden were fully restored in keeping with the historic intent, ready to be used by staff and volunteers this spring. To learn more, visit lordschryver.org/gaiety-hollow.
Celebrate Mom and Dad with a Garden Conservancy Membership!

For many of us, our parents were the first to spark our passion for gardens. What better way to celebrate your parents, grandparents, or the special mom or dad in your life than through a Garden Conservancy gift membership this Mother’s or Father’s day? Memberships connect you to a community of people passionate about gardens and the important role gardens play as connectors to nature and therapeutic outlets in trying times. They also advance our work to preserve, share, and celebrate America’s gardens and diverse gardening traditions.

**Memberships start at just $50** and include exclusive benefits aimed at keeping you at the center of all we do. Members receive 50% off advance purchases of Open Days ticket books, invitations to special programs, and discounted admission to our educational events. We also recently launched a special members’ email series, *In My Garden*, to keep our members connected and inspiring each other during the current challenging times.

Gift memberships can be mailed to you or sent directly to your gift recipient. We will prepare a greeting card on your behalf (including a message from you), and package with a complimentary copy of our *2020 Open Days Directory*. Reading the book itself and learning about hundreds of creative gardeners around the country is inspiring.

Visit us online at gardenconservancy.org/gift-membership to learn more and to order your gift membership today!

Flowering dogwoods at White Flower Farm, Morris, CT