

## Gardens for Good: Helping Gardens Make a Difference

### Sylvester Manor Educational Farm

Originally the hunting ground for Manhasset people on Long Island's east end, Sylvester Manor was owned by the same family for eleven generations and served as a provisioning plantation in the center of Shelter Island, NY. The site transformed to an Enlightenment-era farm, was home to a food industrialist, and today is a community resource, Sylvester Manor Educational Farm, which grows food, provides educational programs, and tells stories to honor the people who lived and worked there. Sylvester Manor Educational Farm's mission is to "preserve, cultivate and share historic Sylvester Manor to ensure that food and art remain connected to community and the land."

To support this mission and help further preservation goals of Sylvester Manor Educational Farm, the Garden Conservancy provided a grant through our Gardens for Good initiative. We are delighted that this grant is funding a landscape plan for the Manor House being created by Anna Kellerman, who is currently completing her master's degree in landscape architecture with a certificate in cultural landscape management at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. Kellerman has a background working in fine gardening and horticulture on Long Island's east end and in the Boston, MA area.

It is fortunate that Sylvester Manor Educational Farm has rich onsite archives maintained by curator Donnamarie Barnes. The collection is filled with photographs from the early 20th century and blueprints dating back to 1908. These archives, along with archives held at the Fales Special Collections at New York University's Bobst Library, are fertile ground for research into the shaping of the landscape.

In 2019-20, the nonprofit organization worked with Nelson Byrd Woltz Landscape Architects to produce both a Cultural Landscape Report and a Comprehensive Landscape Plan. Collectively, the archives, report, and plans are the source material for Kellerman's research into the cultural and historical significance of the plants in the landscape immediately surrounding the historic manor house.

Conveyed in the form of a digital "story map," this report, which follows guidelines for cultural landscape reports, will include recommendations for landscape design that support the nonprofit organization's



Group shot with Sylvester Manor staff at site visit by landscape architect Thomas Woltz and Garden Conservancy staff in July. Front row: James Brayton Hall; second row: Anna Kellerman, Pamela Governale, Thomas Woltz, Stephen Searle, Sara Gordon, Marc Robert, and Donnamarie Barnes

stewardship of the house and its historic surroundings and their commitment to inclusive and nuanced interpretation of this former place of enslavement.

During a week-long site visit to Sylvester Manor in July, Kellerman had the opportunity to learn about the Manor House landscape with numerous Manor adherents, including long-time Manor caretaker Gunnar Wissemann; landscape historian Kate Bolton; Katherine Marshall, a former Sylvester Manor apprentice farmer who went on to horticultural training at a preservation partner garden of the Garden Conservancy; and Manor curator Donnamarie Barnes, who provided access to historical documents in the Manor House vault, including historical garden plans, seed orders, and journal entries on landscape management. Kellerman capped off the week with a site walk around the 235-acre remnant with Thomas Woltz, principal of NBWLA, and Garden Conservancy President and CEO James Brayton Hall and Director of Preservation Pamela Governale.

Today, Sylvester Manor Educational Farm is a vibrant cultural resource, a productive farm, and a managed landscape. It is a compelling site, recently emerging into the public realm after centuries of private ownership. Kellerman's research will help sustain the house and its surroundings into the future, as she adds her scholarship and vision to its unfolding story.

### The Gardens of Alcatraz

The Garden Conservancy recently made a Gardens for Good grant to the Gardens of Alcatraz to purchase an all-terrain vehicle for the garden's horticultural staff and volunteers. Pictured below is Shelagh Fritz, Program Manager, Alcatraz Gardens at Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy, in the new vehicle.

Gardens for Good, an annual initiative, was launched in February. It allows the Garden Conservancy to award "mini-grants" to gardens or organizations that are making a significant impact in their communities through garden-based programming.

