

The Garden Conservancy News

PRESERVING, SHARING, AND CELEBRATING AMERICA'S GARDENS

Fall 2024



Protecting Philadelphia's
Community Gardens PAGE 4

Blithewood Garden's Restoration
Enters New Phase PAGE 6

A Note from the President and CEO

At the end of another beautiful summer, I want to reflect on the vibrancy and vitality that this season has brought to our gardens and communities. It has been a time of growth, discovery, and likely challenges that have brought us together to celebrate the beauty and diversity of the gardens that enrich our lives.

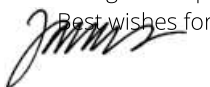
This summer, the Garden Conservancy has been privileged to support a wide array of Open Days tours, Digging Deeper events, and other educational programs. These opportunities have showcased the extraordinary talent within our gardening community while fostering invaluable learning and collaboration. As the Open Days season winds down, I want to express my heartfelt appreciation to everyone who opened their gardens, volunteered, and visited. Your enthusiasm and dedication make these events truly special. This year, we had 339 Open Days across the country, and we are already planning for an even larger and more vibrant collection in 2025.

Our commitment to preserving America's historic gardens continues to be a cornerstone of our work. The ongoing restoration of Blithewood Garden at Bard College, a remarkable representation of an Italianate garden, is a testament to this dedication. Our recent \$93,000 preservation grant for construction drawings—made possible through the generous support of Susan Zises Green and an anonymous donor—marks significant progress in this revitalization effort. As we collaborate with Bard, we are advancing toward the crucial phase of selecting materials to restore the garden's hardscape elements, many of which are in dire need of repair. More details about this exciting progress can be found in the article on page 6.

In addition to our preservation work, we are also proud to support urban gardening initiatives, such as those led by the Neighborhood Gardens Trust (NGT) in Philadelphia. NGT, last year's recipient of the Page Dickey Grant for American Gardens, plays a vital role in transforming vacant lots into vibrant community spaces. These gardens provide fresh food, flowers, and a sense of belonging to their neighborhoods. Through our partnership, we are helping to secure the future of these essential green spaces. You can learn more about NGT's efforts in the article on page 4.

As we transition into autumn, I encourage you to continue embracing the joy that gardening brings. The cooler days ahead offer the perfect opportunity to plan for next year, reflect on this year's successes, and explore the endless possibilities that our gardens present.

Best wishes for a bountiful autumn,



James Brayton Hall
President and CEO



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OUR MISSION

The mission of the Garden Conservancy is to preserve, share, and celebrate America's gardens and diverse gardening traditions for the education and inspiration of the public.

OUR VISION

The Garden Conservancy will be the champion and steward of the vital role gardens play in America's history, culture, and quality of life.

On the cover: The Emerald Street Community Farm in Philadelphia, PA, one of the many community gardens assisted by the Neighborhood Gardens Trust.



Charlotte Moss (bottom center) among a few of her many designs.

Join Us in Honoring Award-Winning Interior Designer Charlotte Moss at the San Francisco Fall Show Luncheon

The Garden Conservancy is delighted to honor award-winning interior designer, author, philanthropist, and Conservancy Fellow, Charlotte Moss at its annual benefit luncheon at the San Francisco Fall Show on October 18.

With a career spanning over three decades, Charlotte Moss is considered one of the most celebrated and respected interior designers in the industry.

Since launching her eponymous firm in 1985, Charlotte's name has become synonymous with Southern warmth and hospitality. She has designed private residences and executive suites across the United States and abroad, and her retail stores have achieved wide acclaim.

Charlotte's designs are heavily influenced by her travels and her love of history. She has used her experience culled throughout her career to design licensed collections with Century Furniture, Fabricut, Stark Carpet, Pickard, P.E. Guerin,

Soicher Marin, IBU Clothing, Artemis Design Company and more.

Known for her timeless aesthetic, layered interiors, and keen eye, her work is celebrated in eleven volumes, the most recent titles with Rizzoli publications: *Charlotte Moss Flowers* (2021) and *Home: A Celebration: Notable Voices Reflect on the Meaning of Home* (2021) which benefits the non-profit, No Kid Hungry.

Charlotte supports a variety of causes and sits on several boards; she is on the Board of the Bone Marrow Foundation, the Madoo Conservancy and the International Council of Hillwood Estate, Museum and Gardens. She is Emerita Trustee of the Thomas Jefferson Foundation at Monticello.

Charlotte's designs have been featured in many major publications. Accolades include the New York School of Interior Design's Centennial Medal, the Royal Oak Foundation's Timeless Design award, and *Elle Décor's* Grand Master's List

of Designers. Charlotte holds an Honorary Doctorate Degree from the New York School of Interior Design and Virginia Commonwealth University, her alma mater.

The luncheon honoring Charlotte will support the Garden Conservancy's preservation and educational efforts in California and celebrate the twentieth anniversary of the Gardens of Alcatraz, which the Conservancy helped revitalize in partnership with the National Park Service and the Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy in the early 2000s. It will be held at the Festival Pavilion of the Fort Mason Center for the Arts & Culture in San Francisco and will be co-chaired by Conservancy board members Shelley Belling, Elizabeth Everdell, Kaye Heafey, and Suzanne Kayne.

To purchase event tickets, please visit gardenconservancy.org/FallShow24 or contact Susan Kenny at skenny@gardenconservancy.org.



Aspen Farms, a community garden with 30 garden plots, was founded in 1975.

Garden Conservancy Support Helps Philadelphia's Neighborhood Gardens Trust Flourish

By Leah Rae

Philadelphia's historic gardens, grand in scale and beauty, flourish on the grounds of old estates, art museums, parks, and open squares set within the urban grid. From

the outset, in the 1600s, William Penn envisioned the city as a "greene country towne," and that aspiration lives on.

Hundreds more gardens—wildly creative, locally stewarded, and created over the last fifty years—thrive in smaller spaces throughout Philadelphia. In the wake of disinvestment and population decline, residents took it upon themselves to turn neglected and trash-strewn lots into healthy places to grow and gather.

Like community gardens across the country, they produce fresh food, flowers, and pollinator species, along with many, less tangible yields—the emotional and health benefits long known to gardeners and increasingly documented by research.

Vibrant as they are, Philadelphia's community gardens—living, dying, and regenerating since the 1970s—often exist precariously, without the security of legal ownership. City policy offers some support

for the goals of green space and garden preservation, but many gardens remain vulnerable to increasing pressure from real estate developers.

One ally critical to the gardens' survival is the Neighborhood Gardens Trust (NGT). The organization started in 1986 and is one of the nation's largest urban land trusts. Its core function is to find legal pathways to preserve community gardens, plot by plot, and to hold ownership of the gardens long-term.

"We just can't afford to lose them," says Jenny Greenberg, NGT's Executive Director. The trust has protected fifty-four community gardens and is working with thirty additional gardens to secure more properties.

In addition, together with partner organizations, NGT advocates for policies that can protect and sustain community gardens into the future. The Pennsylvania Horticultural Society, founded in 1827, is an essential partner, sharing expertise, seedlings, and other forms of support for garden stewards.

In 2023, Neighborhood Gardens Trust received the Page Dickey Grant for

American Gardens, a special recognition for distinguished small public gardens within the Garden Conservancy's Garden Futures Grant Program. The Conservancy's Garden Futures Grants program offers modest amounts of unrestricted funds to provide practical support to small organizations and highlight the work of diverse gardening practices throughout the United States. The \$10,000 grant to NGT is benefiting the trust's core work.

Dickey, celebrated author, gardener, and board emerita of the Garden Conservancy Board of Directors, selected NGT as the grant recipient. She says the work the organization does has enormous appeal.

"I know if I lived in the city without a yard—knowing that my passion is getting down on my hands and knees and gardening—a neighborhood garden would mean so much to me," she says. A Philadelphia native, she can appreciate the role that community gardens play in this gardening mecca. "The smallest garden can be as thrilling as one of the great, gigantic estate gardens," she says.

"It becomes a community," she adds.



Left: Garden Conservancy Director Emerita Page Dickey. Growing Home Garden in South Philadelphia was originally created to improve refugee diets by providing nutritious produce indigenous to their ethnic backgrounds.

"It's this gathering of people, and they're doing something deeply satisfying, growing food for their table or a flower for a vase."

Studies document a range of community benefits that urban green spaces provide, including reductions in depression and symptoms of stress. Community gardens also ease flooding and cool and filter the air. At the Garden Futures Summit, organized by the Garden Conservancy last fall, attendees heard from Nicole Thomas, Director of the Penn Urban Health Lab, which studies the effects of greening initiatives on reducing gun violence in Philadelphia.

NGT's mission is simple, but the work is deeply complex. For one thing, "what appears to be a garden is often made up of multiple, small land properties with different owners," Greenberg says.

For example, there might be a city-owned parcel, and another privately held in the name of a deceased individual, with taxes unpaid, and another held by an LLC involved in real estate speculation. At public auctions, known as sheriff's sales, the city might seek a sale to recoup tax revenue and get the land on the market.

With 40,000 vacant lots across the city, Greenberg says, there's room to achieve multiple goals, including the recovery of taxes owed to the city and the development of affordable housing, while still giving community gardens the protections they need.

NGT and other groups are advocating for improved policies that can make it easier to protect land.

One important avenue is the Philadelphia Land Bank, created ten years ago, which can be a mechanism to acquire tax delinquent properties rather than sell them at auction.

A recent change in state law can help community gardens make use of a legal tool called "adverse possession." The process originally required documentation of the garden's use over twenty-one years, which can be challenging, even if gardens have been in use for multiple decades. The new law reduces the time span for the required documentation to a much more manageable ten years.

The network of gardens NGT protects are astounding in their variety, says Horatio Joyce, Director of Programs and Education at the Garden Conservancy. While the trust leans in to help gardens survive, he notes, it also keeps the gardens as autonomous as possible.

Philadelphia's community gardening movement draws from diverse histories and traditions. African American migrants from the South brought their historic agricultural knowledge and began creating gardens decades ago. In 2010, at the Growing Home Garden in South Philadelphia, refugees from Southeast Asia began sowing herbs, greens, and vegetables used in their traditional cuisine, unavailable at a typical supermarket. A

refugee resettlement group was part of the partnership that started the garden. It brings elders together with grandchildren, a venue for passing cultural traditions to a new generation.

The gardens are constantly evolving and adapting. At another NGT protected garden, the Tulip Street Garden, traditionally blooming with bulbs, the primary steward is taking an interest in native plants and pollinator species. New partnerships are forming to support ecological restoration and education for young residents.

Witnessing the dedication of gardeners across the city, and the joy these spaces provide, is the most gratifying part of her work for NGT, Greenberg says. That, and being able to assure the gardeners that they will not lose the spaces they have come to love.

At the end of growing season, she says, but the work of preserving them does not.

Learn more about the Neighborhood Gardens Trust at ngtrust.org and the Garden Conservancy's Garden Futures Grants at gardenconservancy.org/gardenfutures.



Viola Street Community Garden, founded almost 50 years ago, is one of Philadelphia's oldest community gardens



Caption please

Blithewood Restoration Takes Shape: Material Selection Process Begins

The Garden Conservancy is proud to announce noteworthy progress in the restoration of historic Blithewood garden at Bard College in Annandale-on-Hudson, NY. This ongoing project aims to revitalize the stunning Beaux-Arts Italianate garden, a cornerstone of the Hudson Valley's cultural heritage that has important connections to the evolution of American landscape design.

The Garden Conservancy's collaboration with Bard College has been instrumental in moving the restoration forward. In 2023, a critical milestone was reached with a \$93,000 preservation grant from the Conservancy to Bard—with generous support of Susan Zises Green and an anonymous donor—for the creation of construction drawings. The gift signified a monumental step in reviving this awe-inspiring oasis and embodies the mission

of the Garden Conservancy as the sole national cultural organization dedicated to preserving, sharing, and celebrating America's gardens.

Bard College President Leon Botstein

With the help of the Garden Conservancy, we will ensure that this beautiful, designed landscape continues to be a cherished destination for our community and visitors from around the world.

expressed his gratitude for the Garden Conservancy's support. "Blithewood Garden is an important part of Bard's

history," he said. "With the help of the Garden Conservancy, we will ensure that this beautiful, designed landscape continues to be a cherished destination for our community and visitors from around the world."

The first step in the restoration process was to produce engineering and historic structures reports, focusing on key conditions in the garden, particularly the masonry and carpentry elements. The architects carefully examined areas of deterioration to understand their causes. This initial assessment is crucial for developing a repair strategy that preserves the garden's historic character while ensuring a durable, long-lasting solution. Also, they evaluated the current electrical, security, and plumbing systems and the garden's drainage and grading.

Over the past few years, the

Conservancy and Bard have collaborated on several initiatives to raise public awareness of the project's importance. These included the production and premiere of a documentary short about Blithewood Garden, narrated by award-winning actress and Bard alumna Blythe Danner; a panel discussion; "Digging Deeper" educational events; and even music inspired by the garden. These efforts have successfully generated significant public interest and support for the garden's restoration.

The project is now nearing the exciting phase of material selection for the restoration of the garden's hardscape elements, many of which are severely damaged. Traditionally, the garden has utilized terracotta, a type of fired clay, for features like balustrades. While terracotta offers longevity, it is vulnerable to vandalism, impacts, and harsh weather conditions.

As a potential alternative, cast stone is being considered. Cast stone is a durable material crafted to closely resemble natural stone and offers greater resilience from impact compared to terracotta. Cast stone is stronger than simple architectural pre-cast concrete or cement and is popularly used as a building material. Additionally, cast stone can be meticulously designed to match the intricate details and colors of the garden's original elements.

Representatives from the Conservancy, Bard College, the Friends of Blithewood, and Jan Hird Pokorny Associates—the architectural firm that created the construction drawings—recently visited renowned fabricators Essex Works in Brooklyn, NY, and Metropole in Clifton, NJ, to inquire about how they would approach this project. These shops specialize in crafting ornamental and architectural pieces, including balusters, railings, moldings, columns, and other elements crucial to restoration. Our team observed the production process first-hand, from the creation of patterns and mold-making to casting and finishing. Both fabricators indicated a preference of cast stone over terracotta and the lighter weight glass fiber reinforced concrete for this project.

Blithewood Garden boasts a rich history dating back to the nineteenth century. Understanding the historical context is essential when selecting materials for the restoration. Careful consideration is being given to ensure the chosen materials not only offer lasting durability but also maintain



Douglas Schickler of Essex House in Brooklyn, NY, guides a group working on Blithewood's restoration through the refabrication process.

the aesthetic integrity of this beloved landscape.

"The Hudson River is one of the great wonders, yet there are few places from which to freely enjoy the view and Blithewood is a remarkable garden which is nicely sited above the Hudson," said Elizabeth Ely, a Bard Trustee, alumna, and founding member of the Landscape and Arboretum Program. "How lucky I am to have lived in the Blithewood estate overlooking this landscape over sixty years ago as a student. The garden is unique and I'm so proud it draws thousands every year for this special experience."

The next phase of this project involves finalizing material selections, fundraising, and creating a detailed timeline for the actual restoration work. Construction will begin when funds are raised for each phase of the restoration. We will continue to provide updates as the restoration progresses.

To help restore Blithewood to its former glory, visit gardenconservancy.org/donate and use the dropdown menu to select "Blithewood Garden Rehabilitation, Annandale-on-Hudson, NY."

National Speaking Tour Continues with Two More Stops

This fall, the Garden Conservancy's National Speaking Tour continues with two more stops featuring distinguished speakers from **Hollander Design**

Landscape Architects. The first event takes place at the Missouri Botanical Garden in St. Louis on Thursday, September 26, at 6 p.m., where Geoff Valentino, Chicago Office Director, and Stephen Eich, Urban Studio Director, will share their insights. The second event is at the Filoli Historic House & Garden in Woodside, CA, on Thursday, October 17, at 1 p.m. This time, Hollander Design President Edmund Hollander and Residential Studio Director Melissa Reavis will speak.

In their talks, the partners of Hollander Design will explore the idea of home as the natural surroundings that people live in; a place of living, changing beauty, and joy, where family and friends gather to create a lifetime of memories. Based on the new book, *The Landscape of Home* (2024), the discussion will focus on the firm's work, process, and how they create a rich diversity of landscapes for homes, from country estates to rooftop gardens—along the coast and in town. Throughout, they will discuss essential elements in the firm's



Left to right: Geoff Valentino, Edmund Hollander, Melissa Reavis, and Stephen Eich.

work: the importance of the procession of entry to a house, as well as its context in the landscape; the positioning of plant life and trees; the way people move into and through a property; and the way a garden looks and changes through the seasons.

Since 2018, the Garden Conservancy National Speaking Tour has brought scholars, authors, and experts in design, history,

research, and preservation to numerous locations throughout the country so that their work can be shared with the public.

Tickets for both events are \$45 for Garden Conservancy members, \$55 for non-members. **For more information** about the National Speaking Tour, visit gardenconservancy.org/speakingtour.

Greene Prize Recipient, Wethersfield Estate Featured in *The New York Times*

The Garden Conservancy was recently highlighted in *The New York Times* article titled "Historic Gardens Adapt to Climate Change." The piece by Margaret Roach, published on August 21, sheds light on the growing challenges historic gardens face as they adapt to the evolving climate.

Roach's piece focuses on the iconic Wethersfield Estate in Amenia, NY, one of the gems preserved through our collaborative efforts. It describes how Wethersfield, like many historic gardens, is embracing innovative strategies to ensure its longevity amid shifting environmental conditions. The article mentions how a 2023 cultural landscape report prepared by Heritage Landscapes and underwritten by a \$30,000 Conservancy grant, as part of the Jean and John Greene Prize for Excellence in American Gardening, will help guide the garden through its ongoing restoration process. Our support of this important document is an expression of our mission to foster resilience and innovation in the care and maintenance of this significant garden.

This recognition underscores the importance of our mission and the collective impact of our community in preserving America's garden heritage. We are honored to be acknowledged in such a prestigious publication and remain committed to safeguarding these irreplaceable spaces as the climate continues to shift.



Southern Highlands Reserve Nears Completion of Greenhouse Facility

Southern Highlands Reserve, in Lake Toxaway, NC, is nearing completion of a new state-of-the-art greenhouse facility to boost its efforts to restore the region's endangered spruce-fir forests. The nonprofit is in the final mile of fundraising for the \$2.7 million project, with \$2.2 million collected in grants and donations.

Southern Highlands Reserve is a nationally recognized native plant arboretum and research center dedicated to preserving rare and endangered plants in the region's high-elevation forests. Western North Carolina is one of the most biodiverse areas in the country, and red spruce are the matriarchs of the web of life in the region. The new greenhouse will significantly expand the Reserve's capacity to propagate red spruce and other native plant species. With a successful track record of replanting over 6,000 red spruce on public lands, the Reserve has seen increasing demand for its trees. Once operational, the facility will enable the Reserve to produce thousands of trees annually, contributing significantly to the restoration of the region's precious spruce-fir forests.

"This new greenhouse will become a game-changer for our organization and for regional conservation efforts," said Robert Balentine, the Chair of the Garden Conservancy and co-founder of Southern Highlands Reserve (along with his wife, Betty). "It will allow us to scale our operations and meet the growing demand for red spruce trees while also providing a space for education and research."

The red spruce, the largest conifer



Southern Highlands Reserve co-founder Robert Balentine with a red spruce tree.

indigenous to the Southern Appalachians, is an iconic and central piece of the region's ecosystem. Through more than a century of logging, fire, pollutants, and parasites, the red spruce population in these mountains endured existential decline. The spruce-fir forests are home to two federally endangered species, the Carolina northern flying squirrel and the spruce-fir moss spider, which is the world's smallest tarantula. Also living there are the northern saw-whet owl, red crossbill, brown creeper, black-capped chickadee, hoary bat, silver-haired bat, Weller's salamander, pygmy salamanders, and a type of lichen called hot dots. The U.S. Forest Service has

identified sixteen rare plant species found only in spruce-fir forests. As warming temperatures push more species northward and to higher elevations, red spruce matrons will provide refuge beneath their canopy.

Designed to be environmentally sustainable, the greenhouse will incorporate features like a rain garden and a mountain bog. It will also serve as a model for sustaining native plants through green infrastructure.

The project has received significant funding from the National Forest Foundation, the Gerard B. Lambert Foundation, the Vaughn-Jordan Foundation, and the BAND Foundation. The greenhouse will be named in honor of Rachel L. "Bunny" Mellon, a renowned gardening and environmental philanthropist.

The Reserve is a co-founder of the Southern Appalachian Spruce Restoration Initiative (SASRI), a public-private partnership working to restore the region's spruce-fir forests. It is also the sole provider of red spruce trees to the US Forest Service.

"We're seeding a new future for the forests of the Blue Ridge Mountains," said Southern Highlands Reserve Executive Director Kelly Holdbrooks. "Traditional gardens, horticulturists, and backyard gardeners alike can make a big difference in landscape conservation when we combine resources and expertise."



In Memoriam: Hope Alswang (1947-2024)

The Garden Conservancy mourns the loss of Hope Alswang, a veteran museum director who notably transformed the Norton Museum of Art in West Palm Beach, FL, and recently served eighteen months as a consultant to the Garden Conservancy. She passed away in June at age 77 after a brief illness.

Hope's passion for the arts blossomed early. Her first trip to the Metropolitan Museum of Art with her mother at the tender age of four ignited a lifelong love affair with the power of art. This passion manifested in a dedication to museums, where she spent her career advocating for artistic excellence and accessibility.

As the director of the Norton, Hope spearheaded the stunning \$107 million expansion of the Norton Museum, working with Pritzker Prize winning architect Norman Foster — a key figure in British contemporary architecture — and his firm, Foster + Partners.

"From my perspective, great art deserves great architecture," she told *Architectural Digest* in 2019. "If you want to show important artists, and you want to work with artists, you owe them the opportunity to show their work in the most beautiful surroundings possible."

Hope's vision for the Norton went well beyond its magnificent expansion. She oversaw the acquisition of nearly 1,600 new works and a shift towards original exhibitions, giving voice to a wider range of artistic perspectives. During her nine-year tenure, she diversified the collection, championed women and minority artists, and increased focus on original exhibitions. Initiatives like the "Recognition of Art by Women" series became testaments to her commitment to showcasing the power and diversity of artistic expression.

Hope's influence wasn't limited to the walls of the Norton.



RISD Museum Director Hope Alswang, 2005. Photograph courtesy of the RISD Museum and © Tom Croke/VISUAL Image Inc.

Her collaborative spirit and unwavering belief in the potential of museums resonated throughout her Fifty-year career. She served as the director of three very different museums at key moments in their histories, the New Jersey Historical Society, Shelburne Museum in Vermont, and Rhode Island School of Design Museum, as well as director of the Museum Program of the New York State Council on the Arts.

James Brayton Hall, the Garden Conservancy's CEO and President, worked with Hope at the RISD Museum and then at the Norton, serving as assistant director at both institutions. Hope later consulted on fundraising for the Garden Conservancy and advised on new initiatives.

Beyond her professional accomplishments, Hope will be remembered for her unwavering spirit and strength, her wicked sense of humor, and her great love for her many cats and dogs. Those who

knew her well spoke of her as a force to be reckoned with.

Hope is the mother of Garden Conservancy Director of Public Programming and Education, H. Horatio Joyce. Additionally, Hope is survived by her husband, Henry Joyce; her daughter, Augusta Joyce, and two grandsons, Otto and Caspar Haslberger, of Munich, Germany; and siblings, Frances Alswang of Manhattan and Ralph Alswang of Washington, DC. The interment of her ashes will take place privately, for immediate family.

Hope's legacy is one of vision, passion, and an unwavering dedication to the arts. Her spirit will continue to inspire all who knew her and countless others who will be touched by the vibrant cultural institutions she helped to shape. She will be deeply missed, but her impact will live on in the beautiful spaces she created and the lives she enriched.



Garden Conservancy Open Days™ Marks Largest Season in a Decade

As we wrap up the 2024 Open Days season, we would like to thank the 363 hosts who opened their garden gates making this our largest season in nearly a decade. As of the printing of this newsletter, nearly **34,000 tickets** have been sold, representing Open Days across 22 states (and we still have nearly a month of garden visiting left!) We thank everyone for making this an exceptional season, and we look forward to growing with you!

We are already turning our attention to the 2025 Open Days season and beyond. Are you interested in sharing your garden, or helping to grow the program? Please reach out to opendays@gardenconservancy.org! We'd love to learn more. While the deadline for inclusion in the *2025 Open Days Directory* is **November 1, 2024**, we begin thinking about 2026 and beyond soon!

In Memoriam: Jane Baber White (1940-2024)

Jane Baber White, a dedicated garden preservationist and advocate from Lynchburg, Virginia, passed away peacefully in June at the age of 84. Jane's work has left an enduring mark on Lynchburg and beyond, especially through her preservation of historic gardens and beautification of public spaces. Jane's perseverance and commitment to doing what was right motivated many. She became a certified landscape designer, eventually dedicating herself to volunteer work, including restoring historic gardens. Notably, she revitalized the garden of Harlem Renaissance poet Anne Spencer and transformed the Old City Cemetery into a community treasure.

The Garden Conservancy had the distinct honor of interviewing Jane for its upcoming documentary film on Spencer. Through her role with the Hillside Garden Club, Jane spearheaded two preservation initiatives to preserve Spencer's Garden and celebrate her legacy as Harlem Renaissance poet and civil rights advocate whose home and garden served as a creative refuge for her contemporaries. It was through Jane that the Hillside Garden Club engaged the Conservancy to help restore this ex-

ceptional cultural landscape in 2008.

Her journey with the Anne Spencer House & Garden began in 1981 when she was approached by "renowned aviator" Chauncey Spencer, Anne's son, to restore the garden to its former glory. Jane's leadership and vision, combined with the support of the Hillside Garden Club, resulted in a transformative restoration project. Her dedication brought Anne Spencer's legacy to life, preserving a space that continues to inspire and provide refuge.

In her reflections about the garden's preservation, Jane shared that "one of the great joys has been what was Anne Spencer's that has survived...there were some things that we purposely saved, like the roses and the bulbs, but other things have just popped up everywhere. And I just think isn't that nice. She is still here...I never knew her, but I feel like I know her so well... And [as] I've gotten older, I have more of a sense of companionship with her now, and I feel like I can talk to her."

In addition to her work on Anne Spencer's Garden, Jane revitalized the Old City Cemetery in Lynchburg. She authored three books, including *Lessons Learned*



from a Poet's Garden, The Restoration of the Historic Garden of Harlem Renaissance Poet Anne Spencer, Lynchburg, Virginia (2011).

Jane is survived by her husband of 62 years, Kenneth; their children Gena O'Keefe (Bill), Kenneth Jr. (Niki), and Charles (Kennon); four grandchildren; one great-granddaughter; and many beloved relatives and friends.



Join the Society of Fellows: Exclusive Garden-Study Tours and Events Await

The Society of Fellows is a committed group of garden enthusiasts, supporters, and philanthropists who help advance our work and programs.

Fellows are afforded all the benefits of our general membership program plus more, including invitations to attend exclusive garden-study tours, as well as other special events that showcase gardens and landscapes in distinctive regions in the United States and abroad. Participants learn from renowned horticulturists, designers, and historians, and enjoy gracious hosting in private homes and public institutions.

Visit gardenconservancy.org/joinfellows




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Garden of Bunny Williams, Litchfield, CT Photo: Brian Jones

Not a member? Join us!

Become a Garden Conservancy member and be part of a growing national community passionate about gardens and the essential role they play in our lives.

Join us as we explore some of the most stunning and unique gardens across the United States through Open Days, learn from experts through our in-person and virtual educational programs, and celebrate the horticultural, historic, and cultural value of American gardens through our preservation work.

Your membership will not only help fund our programs, it connects you to all we do through exclusive member benefits. As a member, you will receive several complimentary credits redeemable for Open Days or Virtual Talks, member pricing on all events, the Conservancy's publications, and more!

Visit gardenconservancy.org/membership or call 845.424.6500 to join today!

