Friends of WCBG
WELLESLEY COLLEGE BOTANIC GARDENS

Spring Newsletter, 2017

WELLESLEY COLLEGE

Lost Gardens of Wellesley

Like any living thing, a garden has a lifespan – maturing, changing, and sometimes becoming neglected and abandoned. At Wellesley, gardens have come and gone. It's interesting to have a look at some of these lost gardens to see what they can teach us about the evolving curriculum, advances in ecological understanding, and changing attitudes towards the campus landscape.

Botany Student Gardens

In the initial years of botany instruction at Wellesley, this full-year course of study included gardening outdoors. The earliest botany gardens were located behind Homestead, but when the greenhouses and botany building were constructed on Observatory Hill in the 1920s, new student plots were laid out in the lawn near Woodland Pond in the H.H. Hunnewell Arboretum. Four students were assigned to each 10 foot by 12 foot plot, where they planted crocuses, narcissi and tulips in the fall, and lettuce, radishes, onions, beets, potatoes, nasturtiums, forget-me-nots, daisies, pansies and poppies in the spring. Students were expected to provide all the care for their gardens from watering to weeding. They had to observe their garden plots and write a report, with specific topics left to their discretion. Botany professor Margaret Ferguson provided some suggestions for study: phenology (plant lifecycle events), pollination, variations in growth patterns, and the characteristics of the two most abundant weeds in the plot that enabled them to compete so successfully. All reports had to contain information on the environment of the plot as well as careful observations with exact data. But they were also meant to be "as spontaneous and individual as possible," Ferguson instructed. Her goal was for her students to acquire the power of careful observation and logical thinking, and she believed that Nature would be their best teacher. The student gardens disappeared in the 1950s, when botany ceased being a full-year course and the academic year was shortened to end in early June. Though they don't plant gardens, today's students in Environmental Horticulture make observations and collect data in the Edible Ecosystem Teaching Garden.

Shakespeare lovers promoted the formally designed garden.

The Shakespeare Garden

The story of the Shakespeare Garden is a delightful yet cautionary tale. In 1916, for the 300th anniversary of Shakespeare's death, Professor Katherine Lee Bates proposed the creation of a garden containing all the plants mentioned in his works. This plan excited much interest among the English Department, alumnae and trustees. On the other hand, the Botany Department "expressed sympathy for the idea but no enthusiasm for the responsibility

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NOTES **from the Director**

Greetings from snowy Wellesley! The gardens finally have a thick snow blanket after a January that saw as much rain as snow, despite dips below 0°F early in the month. We had a glorious fall foliage season–surprising given the extreme drought of the summer, as many trees held on to their leaves longer than I expected. My ability to predict plant responses to climate sometimes isn't much better than my ability to predict the weather! The great diversity of trees on campus seems to be a good hedge against such variable weather conditions.

Biodiversity on campus is central to the exciting new Paulson Ecology of Place Initiative, with an aspirational goal of connecting all Wellesley students to nature. After a national search, we were very pleased to hire Dr. Suzanne Langridge to direct the Initiative, beginning in July 2017. Initially a dance major at Smith College, Suzanne fell in love with biology and the natural world while at Smith, and now has over 15 years of experience managing and leading conservation and restoration projects in collaboration with diverse constituencies. She also has taught Restoration Ecology at U.C. Santa Cruz, where her students worked on ecological landscape projects similar to those envisioned at Wellesley. For example, the small kettle pool in the Arboretum, lined with concrete but no longer holding water well, has long been on our list of must-do landscape projects. Now, with the clarifying perspective of the Paulson Initiative, we are studying the area to determine how best to develop it as habitat for amphibians and other animals that make use of kettle ponds and surrounding uplands. Lots of students already are involved in the gathering of data and historical information about the area, and will be part of any interventions we make in the landscape, along with follow-up monitoring of biodiversity and ecosystem function. I can't wait to work with Suzanne to make projects like this one benefit the entire campus community.

And for our big project to bring biodiversity indoors, reinventing the permanent collections greenhouses as Global Flora, I am excited to share that shortly we will be picking up where we left off in design development with the fabulous Kennedy Violich Architects. The large and complex Science Center renovation project is moving into the design phase, and will be developed in conjunction with Global Flora. It was good to see planning sketches for "Science Hill" include Global Flora nestled on the south side of the hilltop near the current greenhouses, as we've been envisioning all along. Additional greenhouses for teaching and research will be part of the Science Center project, so that all of the functions of the wonderful but aged current greenhouses will be replaced (and dramatically improved!). In the meantime, we continue to need to close

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Ping Ji

Students are already gathering data and historical information about the kettle hole.

The Secret Life of Plants: An Exploration of Pattern in Natural Forms

Nature often functions on predictable rhythms, cycles, and patterns. Plants in particular exemplify notable visual arrangements of structure and growth. Just think about the branching symmetry of leaves on a stem or the whirling spirals of flower buds. As an artist and scientist, my creative process involves the practices of close observation and note taking. Whether through line drawings in my visual sketchbook or through words and numbers in my lab notebook, I find myself recording and synthesizing information from the world around me. This principle has been the focus of my year-long studio art thesis exploration in pattern and pattern making. Through the support of the Suzanne Kibler Morris '44 Fellowship, I have had the opportunity to collaborate with both the Wellesley College Botanic Gardens and Wellesley College Art Department in developing a site-based art installation. Using my sketches of the plants in the greenhouses as inspiration, I have created printed sculptural forms that mimic the ways of nature. By introducing the artwork within the collected ecosystem of the greenhouse, it is my hope that visitors will gain an appreciation for the complexities of the natural world.

by Elle Friedberg '17

Student Docents: Sharing Insights on Plants

The student docent program was founded in Fall 2016 to complement the existing docent program and to strengthen the student connection to the botanic collection as well as expand the reach of the education program at the Botanic Gardens. The six student docents, Suika, Elena, Abby, Hannah, Kanika and Lauren, are all first- and second- year students. They have been attending training sessions that cover botany, history of the greenhouses, touring strategies, and other topics. In addition to leading tours for groups that have requested a visit, every Saturday and Sunday at 1 p.m., a student docent gives a public drop-in talk on a plant or a group of plants. Topics of these talks range from the edible *Opuntia* cactus, to plants of medicinal use. They will also be found explaining the symbolism of plants in Renaissance art at the Greenhouse Light Show in March! – **Ningyi Xi '17**, Thorndike Intern and leader of student docent program

One of the most captivating plants I've learned about at the Greenhouses is the pandanus, otherwise known as the screw pine. The one at the greenhouses is particularly impressive, as it has nearly reached the ceiling of the tropical house. I find this plant fascinating because its wide trunk is supported by prop roots that are above ground and highly visible, meant to secure the palm in soil that may be loose due to excessive rainfall, as in a rainforest. Over the years, the roots of Wellesley's pandanus have appeared to "walk" or migrate across the ground, presumably towards more sunlight, moisture, etc. Incredible! – **Hannah Cho '20**

One of the most amazing things that I have learned is how the plants in the desert house have adapted to make sure that they do not lose water. The fact that the spines are the leaves is cool. Usually we have such a definite image of a plant in our heads and to see it be shaken up and for the form to differ is pretty amazing to me. A plant's ability to survive such extreme climates is also amazing to me! – **Kanika Gupta '19**

Being a docent at the Wellesley greenhouses I have learned that plants are entwined in every part of humanity, and have been for all of our collective history. A good example of this is the papyrus plant, which is housed in our Hydrophyte House. In ancient Egypt, papyrus was used for virtually everything: making shoes, baby cradles, firewood, prayer and celebration decorations, shade, medicine, paper–anything you can imagine, people used papyrus for. Every home would have had papyrus in it in some shape or form. Here at Wellesley we honor this tradition of humanity's connection with plants by cultivating (and offering tours of) the gardens, and greenhouses, offering horticulture and plant biology classes, giving first years their 'first year plant', and so much more. – **Abby Harrison '19**

Student docents: Lauren Tso '20, Suika Sono-Knowles '20, Elena Ubeda '20, Kanika Gupta '19, Abby Harrison '19 (not pictured: Hannah Cho '20 and Thorndike Intern Ningyi Xi '17)

I've really loved learning all the specific biological details about the plants, such as the difference between bracts and petals. Biology is my intended major, focusing on organismal ecology, so this is exactly what piques my interest. And learning everything I can about specific plants makes me feel really close to them. I love being able to feel that way with more and more plants in the greenhouses as time goes on. – **Suika Sono-Knowles '20**

Two of the greatest thinIs in life are plants and food. The most amazing thing I've learned about plants in the greenhouse is how often those two intersect. Many of these plants are edible; bananas, the *Opuntia* cactus, and jasmine are just some of the varieties grown here at Wellesley. Other plants provide food and sustenance for insects and animals in symbiotic relationships. A few are even carnivorous and obtain their food through their prey. However they intersect, plants and food share the same roots. – Lauren Tso '20

I learned about the diverse array of uses, both historical and contemporary, of plants. Specifically, I focused on their medical properties. From the *Opuntia* cactus to the Madagascar periwinkle, and from uses such as acupuncture needles to antineoplastic agents, the greenhouses at Wellesley house an amazing collection of truly powerful plants. – **Elena Ubeda '20**

Modern Herbalism and the Edible Ecosystem

As a practicing herbalist I am passionate about connecting people with plants, especially to herbs that can be used to promote one's health, vitality and overall well-being. The classes I teach involve students interacting directly with the plant world, learning about the traditional and medicinal uses of plants, and exploring practical ways to use herbs in their everyday lives.

Although being an herbalist is not the most common profession, it is a field that people have regained interest in over the past several decades. My job as an herbalist involves several aspects. I work with individual clients for holistic health consultations, helping to match beneficial herbs and lifestyle changes to their unique health needs. The majority of my work, however, lies in education which is my true love: I teach people how to incorporate herbs in safe and gentle ways into their everyday lives. I feel it is important to create learning opportunities that are accessible to people without prior herbal experience, and in which I can help to de-mystify the world of herbs.

Over the past several seasons I have had the opportunity to share my herbal experience with Wellesley students through the use of the Edible Ecosystem Teaching Garden. The garden has been such a wonderful and experiential way to show students plants that have been used for healing purposes over many centuries. Through our outdoor classes we discuss the history and cultural importance of these special herbs, and how they may continue to be used in our modern lives. We also review identification skills by observing plants' unique botanical characteristics.

Even dandelions have unique botanical characteristics.

In our next herbal session, a 7 week-long summer series, we will again make good use of the Edible Ecosystem garden. This series is an introductory herbalism class that demonstrates practical ways to use medicinal plants through a variety of techniques. In it we'll cover the traditional and modern-day uses of herbs, reviewing information about their uses, origins, and how they can be prepared and consumed. We'll also have hands-on time outside with the plants, learning how to identify the herbs covered in the course and also how to properly harvest, dry and store them.

Each class will include tea tastings of the herbs we cover. We will also explore herbal medicine-making techniques, with time for students to have hands-on experience. We'll cover garden-cultivated plants and also take an in-depth look at some of our common "weedy" plant species that seem to flourish wherever there is human activity.

Herbal medicine may seem old-fashioned, complex, or impractical, when in reality, it is none of these things. Come learn how approachable and beneficial our local plants truly are—you may be delighted and surprised to discover a whole new world awaits you in the joy of herbalism!

by Steph Zabel
www.flowerfolkherbs.com

Herbalist Steph Zabel teaches and works with individual clients.

Classes include tastings of teas made from various herbs.

Herbalism classes make good use of the Edible Ecosystem Teaching Garden.

Too Many Names?

Neomarica northiana, which we call the Walking Iris, looks like a cross between an iris and an orchid. As a matter of fact, another of its many common names is Poor Man's Orchid; however, despite its looks it is an iris in the Iridaceae family.

It was first gathered in Brazil by Sir Joseph Banks, a British naturalist and botanist. As a wealthy young man, he paid for himself and several fellow scientists to collect and document plants on Captain James Cook's first voyage. Later, as advisor to King George III, Banks eventually made the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew into one of the most influential in the world.

The genus name *Neomarica* is derived from the Greek words *neo*, meaning new, and *Marica*, a nymph in Roman mythology. *Northiana* stands for someone named North. Although we don't know for sure, it is probable that this name honors Marianne North, a Victorian botanical artist who travelled unaccompanied around the world to 15 countries, including Brazil, painting native plants. More than 800 of her paintings hang at Kew Gardens. She was a friend of Banks and several other tropical plants carry *northiana* as a species name. Another of *Neomarica northiana*'s common names is North's False Flag referencing North. Irises are commonly called flags.

The flower is typical of monocots in that the reproductive parts are divisible by three. The outer three sepals are white with brown tiger-like stripes guiding pollinators towards the nectar. The inner three petals have similar brown stripes but their hooded ends are topped with blue stripes. The elaborate white stigma, where the pollen will land, sticks up like a six-pointed white crown surrounded by three hairy blue stamens (see sketch). The plants in our greenhouses don't develop fruit but are easily propagated by plantlets. These look like fans because their leaves are all in one plane. In fact, Fan Iris is yet another of *Neomarica*'s common names.

A *Neomarica northiana* plant with developing buds, a new flower and a plantlet succeeding a flower. Close-ups show the fan shape of the plantlet and the beauty of the blossom.

The lovely Walking Iris bloom lasts less than a day.

After a plantlet develops several leaves, a flower will emerge from a flat flower stalk. It is said that the plant will not flower until there are at least 12 leaves, the number of Jesus's apostles, thus the basis for yet another common name, the Apostle Plant. After it blooms—and the blooms last just a day—a new plant will start to grow above the spent flower and new leaves will start. The weight of this plantlet causes the stalk to bend toward the ground and "walk" away from the parent plant to root, thus the Walking Iris.

I invite you to visit the greenhouses and take a closer look at our Walking Iris, Apostle Plant, Fan Iris, North's False Flag, and Poor Man's Orchid! Each name describes a different aspect of this interesting plant. (By the way, it also has a second Latin name, *Neomarica gracilis.*) You can never have too many names!

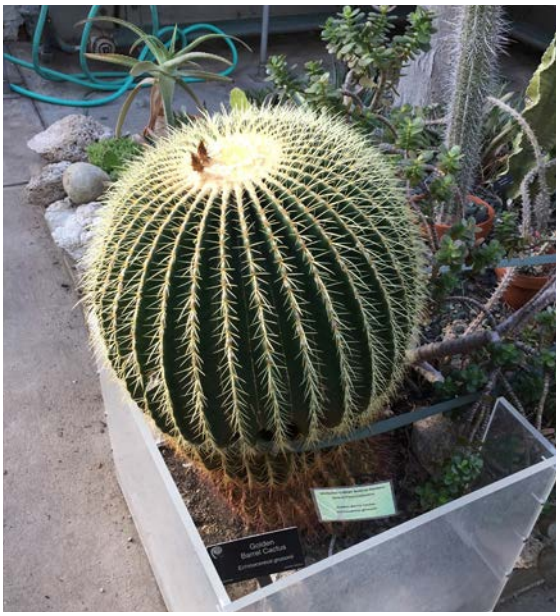
by Carol Govan
WCBG Friends Instructor

Plant Stories from

Greenhouse docents love stories about the particular plants they talk about to visitors. It is so interesting to look up into the branches of a tall tree and find out that it came into the greenhouse in a small pot carried by a horticulturist they know, and not so long ago either. Here are a few favorite plant tales, gathered by WCBG Assistant Director Gail Kahn for docents for the 2015 Light Show.

Golden barrel cactus

The Golden Barrel cactus, *Echinocereus grusonii,* is one of the most dramatic plants in the greenhouses particularly because of its position at the entrance to the desert house and its way of leaning into the pathway so a visitor has to pay attention. At some times of the year it has a number of pointy brown bumps on top, buds of its short-lived flat yellow flowers. It arrived at Wellesley in an unusual way, as the gift of an alumna who accepted a commission. A striking desert plant was needed to enhance the Wellesley College display at the 1984 Boston Flower Show which that year featured plants adapted to low-water conditions. Ruth Wilson '48, who spent time each winter in Scottsdale AZ, was asked if she could find a suitable specimen for the exhibit while she was there. It took her several trips to local plant nurseries until she found our Golden Barrel in the back lot of one of the larger nurseries. It was carefully packed up and sent to Wellesley, where it arrived somewhat disheveled with styrofoam peanuts spiked on its spines. Although it was too late for the flower show, the cactus has thrived and grown as a central feature of the Desert House. In fact, a few years ago, a plexiglass shield had to be made for it to protect passers-by and a belt now secures it to a stout post so it can't lean any further.



The golden barrel cactus is now secured by a shield and strap.

Cycad

For many years, the Wellesley College Botanic Gardens participated in the Spring Flower Show organized by the Massachusetts Horticultural Society. Botanic Gardens staff created educational displays and received ribbons and prize money for them. Among the topics covered were plant color; plant dyes; dispersal and uses of seeds; convergent evolution; plants used as food, fiber and medicine; plant propagation; and forcing branches indoors for spring bloom. Horticulturist Tony Antonucci remembers constructing these exhibits and taking them to the Flower Show. Horticulturist Tricia Diggins was also an active participant in planning and construction, even creating hand-sewn banners.

The cycad served as a part of the Botanic Gardens' Flower Show exhibit on or around 1960. It had developed a shoot that hit the ceiling and needed to be taken down, so Harriet Creighton and horticulturist Joe Jennings decided to take that shoot to the Flower Show. It needed to be removed through the south side of the Tropic House, and extra panes of glass were taken out to get it out of the greenhouse. Harriet said that at one point she wasn't sure if the greenhouses were going to survive its removal.

At this time, the Flower Show was being held in tents at Wonderland, the greyhound racetrack in Revere. A March blizzard hit the area and collapsed the tent, but the cycad held the tent up. Harriet liked to conclude this story with, "... and that's how the Wellesley College cycad saved the Flower Show."

Hero of the flower sho
for the roof.

Cannonball tree

In 2003, horticulturist David Sommers did a Google image search for interesting flowers and this is where he first saw the cannonball flower, *Couroupita guyanensis*. The staff were making an order for tropical plants, and he saw this tree listed and asked to add it. It was a 14-inch long twig when it arrived. This plant has lived in about 5 different sized pots before it was finally put into the pot it is in now. You can see it has grown out of its current pot, rooting into the soil in the center bed. The New York Botanical Garden and the Huntington Botanical Gardens have cannonball trees that rarely, if ever, bloom. Ours blooms frequently! The bloom is colorful, fragrant, and looks like some sort of sea creature.

The cannonball flow

n the Greenhouse

w, the Wellesley College cycad, is still reaching

© David Somers

ver looks like some sea creature.

Screw pine

For several years, the screw pine, *Pandanus utilis*, was a small plant in a 12-inch pot. Horticulturists David Sommers and Tricia Diggins planted it in its present location 14 years ago. It shot up rapidly, sending out prop roots. You can still see the original, spindly roots in the back. The plant's leaves grow in a spiraling, corkscrew pattern, hence the common name. (The tree is a pandanus and is not related to pine trees at all.) Its long strap leaves have sharp edges like a serrated knife. The horticulturists had to keep trimming them back so that people weren't hurt. As the lower leaves died, the leaf bases still show the lovely spiraling pattern.

The screwpine has been pruned heavily many times in its 14 years.

In anticipation of Global Flora, caudiciforms are on display this spring.

Seasonal displays

In the past, the greenhouse staff created two or more floral displays in the Seasonal Display House every year. Spring bulbs were overwintered in the cool pits and then forced into bloom for an early glimpse of spring. In the fall, chrysanthemums were raised for display. The highlights of the chrysanthemum show were the cascading chrysanthemums that the horticulturists created by carefully training the plants over chicken wire. The winter display included poinsettias and amaryllis. The spring nasturtium arch is perhaps the most iconic floral display at the Botanic Gardens.

Horticultural practices have changed over the years. The lush floral displays of the past used synthetic fertilizers, while we now employ organic fertilizers, compost teas and other organic treatments. The goal of the current practices is to maximize the general health of the plant, not to prioritize extravagant bloom. The chrysanthemum display in particular was prone to pest insects like spider mites that were a hazard to the rest of the greenhouse collection, and was discontinued around 2008.

More recently, WCBG has branched out with seasonal displays of jungle cacti and drought-adapted plants in anticipation of the proposed Dry House display in Global Flora.

Learn With Us

- All classes are held in the WCBG Visitor Center unless otherwise noted.
- For classes over the lunch hour, bring your own lunch or walk to local shops.
- Full course descriptions and material lists may be found on our website.
- Parking on campus is restricted. Use of the Davis Parking Garage or car pooling from off campus is encouraged.

Pre-registration is required. Use the registration form on page 11 or print a form online: www/wellesley.edu/wcbg/learn.

Hope Floats on White: White Gardens

This illustrated lecture by author and garden designer Carol Julien features the design techniques for creating a white garden.

HOR 17 080
Friday, Apr. 7
1:30 p.m.
Members Free | Non-Members $10

Family, Form and Function: Lectures and Greenhouse Walks with Carol Govan

Carol talks about the connections among related plants and how they express their genetic heritage in response to their environments.

Arums
HOR 17 085
Friday, Apr. 14
10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
Members Free / Non-Members $10

Photo Journey to Southern India

Join Maureen Bovet for an armchair tour of tropical gardens, lakes and tea plantations in southern India.

HOR 17 090
Thursday, May 18
10:00 a.m.
Members Free | Non-Members $10

Introduction to Herbalism

HOR 17 120
Herbalist Steph Zabel demonstrates practical ways to gather and use medicinal herbs in this course for adults and teens age 16 and up in WCBG's Edible Ecosystem Teaching Garden.
7 Wednesdays: June 7, 14, 21, 28; July 12, 19, 26
2:00 – 4:00 p.m.
Members $225 | Non-Members $275

Introduction to Scientific Pen Techniques

BAC 17 144
In this 4-week class with Ellen Duarte, you will learn the use of line quality, stippling and cross-hatching along with other Micron pen techniques.
4 Thursdays: March 30; Apr. 6, 13, 20
9:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.
Members $150 | Non-Members $200

New England Flora 2017

BAC 17 211
Find a natural habitat close to home and learn how to identify flowers, ferns, shrubs, grasses and trees. Follow these plants through the growing season under the guidance of Carol Govan and Pam Harrington, and create accurate illustrations of your habitat.
7 Tuesday meetings:
9:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.: Mar. 28; Apr. 11; May 2; June 13 (at a field site TBD); July 25; Sept. 6
1:00 – 4:00 p.m.: Oct. 3
Members $360 | Non-Members $450

Color Mixing for Artists

BAC 17 113
With Susan Fisher's easy system, you will learn to mix the colors you want, not the ones you end up with through trial and error.
3 days: Friday, Apr. 21 – Sunday, Apr. 23
9:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.
Members $350 | Non-Members $450

Watercolor Landscapes
WCC 17 203

Susan Swinand teaches adults at all levels of experience to solve the problems of painting on location. Follow your own interests in the classroom or work on site in the gardens.
7 Thursdays: May 4, 11, 18, 25; June 1, 15, 22
1:00 – 4:00 p.m.
Members $200 | Non-Members $250

Drawing and Painting for the Petrified
BAC 17 010

In this relaxed and informative seminar with plenty of helpful demonstrations, work toward developing your drawing and painting skills under the direction of Sarah Roche. All abilities and anxiety levels welcome.
4 Wednesdays: May 17, 24, 31; June 7
9:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.
Members $125 | Non-Members $150

Introduction to Botanical Art
BAC 17 101A

Explore the world of botanical art in this course designed especially for the beginner. Sarah Roche guides you through structured exercises, projects and demonstrations, exposing you to the basic techniques of botanical drawing and watercolor painting.
5 days:
Monday, June 12 – Wednesday, June 14
9:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.
Thursday, June 15 and Friday, June 16
9:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.
Members $275 | Non-Members $325

Floral Greetings
BAC 18 061

Join Ellen Duarte in the greenhouses and gardens to draw your favorite flowers, then explore ways to have your creations reproduced as notecards and other items.
3 Thursdays: July 13, 20, 27
9:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.
Members $115 | Non-Members $140

Sketching Flowers on Tinted Paper
BAC 18 134

Carol Ann Morley teaches you how to capture the beauty and form of a flower using tinted paper and just two colored pencils, an elegant way to capture nature when time is limited (or not!).
2 days: Monday, Aug. 28 and Tuesday, Aug. 29
9:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.
Members $170 | Non-Members $220

Drawing Nature: A Focus on White Subjects
BAC 18 150

Overcome the challenges of nature's white subjects. Carol Ann Morley shows you a layering technique for colored pencils to illuminate a white subject on a dark toned pastel paper.
3 days: Wednesday, Aug. 30 – Friday, Sept. 1
9:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.
Members $250 | Non-Members $300

Family Programs:

Art Alive at the Greenhouses Arts Exploration: Ages 7-12
CHP 17 102

Each week aspiring young artists will have fun creating a different project using acrylic paints, watercolors, oil pastels, markers, pencils, different types of paper and unexpected materials. All materials will be provided.
5 Sundays: Apr. 2, 9, 30; May 7, 21
3:15 – 4:15 p.m.
Members $65 | Non-Members $85

Print a children's art class registration form at www.wellesley.edu/wcbg/learn/families_kids

For more details on these and other programs contact the Friends office for the Spring/Summer Brochure or visit our website: www.wellesley.edu/wcbg/learn

Certificate in Botanical Art and Illustration

2017 Awards Ceremony
Monday, June 5, 4:00 p.m.: lecture, ceremony and reception
"Botanical Artist Activists" Carol Govan looks at the art and environmental activism of artists such as Margaret Mee, Heeyoung Kim and Kay Kopper.
Free; please call 781-283-3094 or email wcbgfriends@wellesley.edu to let us know you are attending, so we will have enough seating.
CBA Artist Exhibition: May 16 – June 7 / WCBG Visitor Center

Lost Gardens *Continued from page 1*

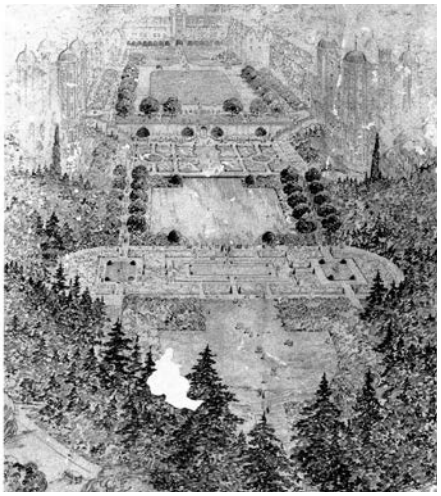
of executing it," as Harriet Creighton so succinctly put it. The Shakespeare lovers prevailed, and horticulture and landscape gardening instructor Helen Davis was tasked with laying out a garden in the grounds below Oakwoods. Its formal design of a large square sub-divided into quadrants was typical of an Elizabethan garden, featuring a 17th century sundial from Stratford-on-Avon, the gift of a generous alum. The garden was dedicated in a College-wide celebration that included a costumed herald blowing a silver horn and, naturally, many quotes from the Bard. College President Ellen Pendleton, Bates and other professors, students and guests all took turns planting their favorite Shakespeare plants. Altogether about 25 species were planted, some of which were barely to not-at-all winter-hardy (rosemary, boxwood, eglantine rose), others of which were annuals or plants that needed periodic replacement (pansies, tulips), and all of which inhabited high-maintenance, formal garden beds. The Report of the President for 1916 noted, "The garden awaits other gifts for its maintenance." Apparently those gifts did not materialize, because Helen Davis and her landscape gardening classes spent the next ten years in diligent service to the garden. Eventually Davis gave up the effort; the timing suggests that designing and overseeing the construction of the H.H. Hunnewell Arboretum and Alexandra Botanic Garden may have prompted her to abandon the time-consuming Shakespeare Garden. Harriet Creighton wrote in 1975, "The sundial was moved to Shakespeare House, and the beds were seeded to grass. All that remains are the leveled areas and a few English hawthorn trees–and the lesson that formal plantings require expensive care." Today, a single hawthorn tree alongside College Road across from Dower Lot might be the last remaining evidence of this garden. Perhaps it is even the hawthorn planted by President Pendleton herself.

The Jennings Biblical Garden

Named for Joe Jennings, who was supervisor of the greenhouses and gardens for over 38 years, the Jennings Biblical Garden was established in 1980 in the H.H. Hunnewell Arboretum, at the edge of the Arboretum Lawn. The garden was the outgrowth of an exhibit of plants mentioned in the Bible, shown by the horticulture staff at the Massachusetts Horticultural Society's Spring Flower Show. The plants in the garden closely match (down to the specific cultivar) the planting list in a pamphlet, found in the hort staff office, from the Biblical Garden of Temple Israel, Boston, which suggests that the temple's garden was an inspiration. The obvious problem with a garden of Biblical plants in the Northeast U.S. is that many are not adapted to our colder environment. So substitutions were made: Hinoki falsecypress for Mediterranean cypress (*Cupressus sempervirens)*, flowering almond for almond (*Prunus dulcis*), Russian olive instead of common olive *(Olea europaea*). A 1984 photo of the area shows small beds in which woodies and perhaps some of the bulbs and herbs from the Flower Show display were planted, but those beds and plants have disappeared. While still alive, the flowering almond and green ash are struggling with pests. The Concord grapes in the rustic wooden arbor are doing well, and the Russian olive seems fine (an invasive species in the western U.S., its invasive status in Massachusetts has not yet been determined). The cedar of Lebanon, which is perhaps the defining plant of the garden, is still thriving. While not yet a lost garden, the Jennings Biblical Garden is certainly diminished from its heyday.

Plans for Hazard Quad and the Alexandra Botanic Garden

A look at lost gardens wouldn't be complete without mentioning a couple of gardens that never came to be. Both were proposed by Arthur Shurtleff, considered



The Shurtleff plan for the never-built formal gardens in Hazard Quad.

one of the two leading landscape architects in the country at the time (the other was Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr.). Shurtleff devised a formal garden for Hazard Quad. Its terraces, parterres, fountains and allées of ornamental trees would have looked quite at home around a palace. The fact that the design went through several iterations implies that a donor was interested. It may well have been Cordenio and Mary Severance (Class of 1885), who had already given funds in memory of their daughter Alexandra for flower beds in the Quad. Shurtleff also submitted a plan for the Botanic Gardens that included formal flower beds ringing a central pool. Both plans demonstrate a conception of Wellesley student life that was at odds with reality: a place of genteel strolling in a manicured environment, supported by the work of many gardeners. His suggestions were quietly put aside by the trustees. It was the Botany Department, led by Margaret Ferguson, who took up the idea of a memorial garden with the Severances. It took seven years of stewardship, but the Severances were eventually convinced that Helen Davis's naturalistic plan for the Alexandra Botanic Garden was a fitting memorial for their daughter.

by Gail Kahn
WCBG Assistant Director

Director's Notes *Continued from page 2*

the greenhouses during periods of high winds, despite another round of shoring up with wooden supports last month.

Great things are happening in the greenhouses this winter nonetheless, as our new student docents are giving regular weekend "short talks" and, along with the Botanistas and our staff, preparing for the Greenhouse Light Show. Students in my Environmental Horticulture class are working to overcome "plant blindness" by observing and sketching many diverse plants in the permanent collections. And Morris Fellow Elle Friedberg '17 has been a regular presence, working on her very creative plant patterns project, which will culminate with an installation in the greenhouses in late April. (See Ruhlman abstract on p 2.)

Wishing you peace and calm this winter, and a glorious spring.

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Volunteer With the Friends

Share your love of nature and gardens with others by becoming a tour leader for the outdoor gardens. Free training sessions on Fridays from 9:30 a.m. – 12:00 noon: Apr. 28; May 5, 12, 19 New docents are encouraged to participate in as many of the training sessions as possible. Pre-registration is required.

Remembering Nancy Dillon


Nancy Dillon was a steadfast friendly presence at the Visitor's Center desk.

It was with sadness that Friends of Botanic Gardens learned of the passing of long-time volunteer Nancy Dillon in mid-December. Nancy started volunteering with the Friends soon after her retirement as a florist department manager at Roche Bros. As well as training and serving as a docent, she led classes for the Friends on flower arranging. For many years, Nancy was a steadfast presence at the greeter's desk in the Visitor Center. When she wasn't welcoming visitors, Nancy would take the opportunity to tidy the back counter and other areas of the room, which Eileen and Gail deeply appreciated. Nancy also lent a frequent hand at student events, and enjoyed trips to other gardens with the Friends. A lover of nature, horses, flowers and family, Nancy was also a fixture in the New England equestrian community and actively involved with her local church. The Friends will always remember her cheerfulness and willingness to lend a helping hand.