



Magnolia grandiflora
The Laurel Tree of Carolina
Catesby's *Natural History*, 1743

Magnolia

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Louis LeConte's Bulb Garden, 1813-1838

By Sara Van Beck, Atlanta, Georgia

The founding of America's early institutional botanic gardens coincided with America's westward expansion, as important political figures sought to establish American bona fides in scientific and cultural fields. While ostensibly to provide a means to classify and document America's native flora, botanic gardens often included exotics for medicinal and ornamental purposes. In addition, this period was a brief heyday for *Narcissus* and bulbs in general, prior to nineteenth-century horticultural fashions taking hold.

Notable botanic gardens founded or legislated between 1800 and 1820 include the Botanic(k) Garden at Cambridge, Massachusetts (1805/1807), the Elgin Botanic Garden (New York City, 1801), the Botanick Garden of South Carolina (Charleston, 1805), the University of Pennsylvania (1807), and the Botanic Garden of the Columbian Institute (Washington, D.C., 1820). Amateur botanists, often physicians, similarly created botanic gardens at their homes, their collections reflecting their personal interests. These individuals supplied new plant specimens to botanical journals, assisted other famous plant collectors, and provided regional insights. In Georgia, one such person was Dr. Thomas Jarram Wray of Augusta, whose botanic garden was filled with native herbaceous plants, bulbs, and succulents. Another was Louis LeConte in coastal Georgia, with a botanic garden full of bulbs.

Louis LeConte (1782-1838) grew up in New Jersey and New York City. Along with his younger brother John ("Major," 1784-1860), he helped create a scientific family dynasty in nineteenth-century America. Louis was as uninterested in acclaim or notice of any sort as his younger brother was flashy and inclined to publish nationally to international renown. After graduating from Columbia College in 1799, Louis studied medicine under Dr. David Hosack (who founded the Elgin Botanic Garden),

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Single Jonquil, *Narcissus jonquilla*.

Photo courtesy of Drew McFarland, Granville, Ohio.

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CALENDAR

Please visit the SGHS Web site, www.southerngardenhistory.org, for a complete and more detailed calendar with the latest updates and links to individual Web sites.

Now through June 15, 2014. American Botanical Paintings, an exhibition at the U. S. Botanic Garden, Washington, DC, displaying works from the book *American Botanical Paintings: Native Plants of the Mid Atlantic*. The collection of paintings was sponsored by the Botanical Artists for Education and the Environment (BAEE), a non-profit organization that supports native plant education, conservation, and horticulture. Visit usbg.gov and baeecorp.org

April 11-12, 2014. "Growing your Gardening Skills," Historic Columbia, South Carolina. This two-day event features a reception in a historic riverfront setting at Senate's End and a tour of the garden of the Woodrow Wilson family home. Call (803) 252-1770 x 27 or email lduncan@historiccolumbia.org

May 30-June 1, 2014. Triennial Garden Symposium at George Washington's Mount Vernon. This conference will examine, discuss, and evaluate a wide variety of topics—starting below ground with appropriate eighteenth-century bulbs and the search for lost gardens; moving to gardening under cover and specialized structures for maintaining plants throughout the winter, then to the trans-Atlantic exchange of seed and their frontier stories; and finally gardens of eighteenth-century Virginia. Speakers include Nicholas Luccetti, M. Kent Brinkley, William Rieley, Scott Kunst, Fiona McAnally, Wesley Greene, Jack Gary, Peter Hatch, and Dean Norton. Visit mountvernon.org/gardens/symposium

June 1, 2014. The 8th Annual Belfield Design Lecture: "Sitting Pretty: An Illustrated History of the Garden Seat," presented by the Beatrix Farrand Garden Association. A lecture by John Danzer of Munder-Skiles will precede a reception and heirloom plant sale. Danzer has conducted extensive research on the furniture designs of Beatrix Farrand and has created reproductions that are now in place at Dumbarton Oaks. Contact info@beatrixfarrandgarden.org; or visit beatrixfarrandgardenhydepark.org

June 12 – September 6, 2014. An Exhibition: "Taking Root: The Summer Brothers and the History of Pomaria Nursery," at the McKissick Museum of the University of South Carolina, Columbia, SC. The renowned Pomaria Nursery, begun in the late 1830s by William Summer, was first to appear in the lower and middle South. The exhibition highlights the life of William and his brother Adam Summer, and features their innovative technologies, new fruit and flower breeding techniques, and introduction

of new ornamentals. Jointly curated by Drs. Kajal Ghoshroy and Edward Puchner (McKissick Museum) and Dr. James Kibler (Ballylee Nature Conservancy). Call (803) 777-7251 or visit artsandsciences.se.edu/mckissickmuseum.

June 22-27, 2014. 18th Annual Historic Landscape Institute, "Preserving Jefferson's Gardens and Landscapes," held in Charlottesville, Virginia. Course uses the gardens and landscapes of Monticello and the University of Virginia as an outdoor classroom for the study of historic landscape preservation. Lectures, workshops, fieldtrips, and practical working experiences will provide an introduction to the fields of landscape history, garden restoration, and historical horticulture. Fee charged; registration required. Contact Peggy Cornett at pcornett@monticello.org, (434) 984-9816; or visit monticello.org/hli.

September 12-13, 2014. 8th Annual Heritage Harvest Festival at Monticello. This family-friendly event in Charlottesville, Virginia, celebrates Thomas Jefferson, who championed vegetable cuisine, sustainable agriculture, and plant experimentation by featuring heirloom fruits and vegetables, organic gardening, seed saving, and more. Visit heritageharvestfestival.com

October 15 – 17, 2014. "Telling the Gardens Story," presented by the Historic Landscape Section of the American Public Garden Association, hosted by Winterthur Museum, Garden and Library, Newark, Delaware. Join historic landscape and garden professionals to explore, learn, and share strategies for interpreting our gardens to new audiences in the digital age, while honoring layers of history, caring for aging plant collections, and building core support within the organization. Keynote speaker: Charles Birnbaum. Contact Linda Eirhart at LEirha@winterthur.org

October 31-November 2, 2014. "Colonial Revival at the Crossroads: Colonial Revival landscapes— their significance, challenges, and preservation," at Stratford Hall, Virginia, explores how to identify, evaluate, interpret, and manage Colonial Revival landscapes. The three-year study of Stratford Hall's landscape and gardens, along with other regional Colonial Revival sites, will offer participants a "case study" in which to explore these issues. Speakers include: M. Kent Brinkley, Dr. Elizabeth Hope Cushing, Kenneth McFarland, Dr. Dennis Pogue, William Rieley, Dr. Douglas Sanford, Lucy Lawliss, and Beate Jensen. Contact Jon Bachman, jbachman@stratfordhall.org; call (804) 493-1972; visit stratfordhall.org/event

Louis LeConte's Bulb Garden.....(continued from page 1)

presumably learning medical botany as well. Dr. Hosack was passionate about botany, bringing a duplicate set of Carl Linnaeus' herbarium specimens to America. His passion infected both LeContes.

Like Louis, John was interested in botany, along with entomology and zoology, and also studied botany at Columbia under Dr. Hosack. John published his first of roughly twelve botanic papers in 1811, and went on numerous collecting trips across the country. He spent countless winters with Louis and his family. After Louis' death, John spent winters at his niece Jane Harden's plantation home in Halifax, Georgia (introducing there the LeConte pear), and became especially attached to Jane's daughter Matilda in his later years. Thus, John's legacy can obfuscate that of Louis' if one is not attentive.

Louis permanently moved to the LeConte family rice plantation in Liberty County, roughly forty miles southwest of Savannah, by 1810. In 1812 he married a local girl from the prominent Midway community, Ann Quarterman; in return for her blessing, Louis promised Ann's mother he would never take her out of the county. Louis expanded the existing familial "bachelor's lodge" to suitable proportions, and created his botanic garden, thought to be about an acre in size. As a physician he treated the plantation's slaves as well as poor local white farmers, his interest and need for medicinal plants being one of the reasons that led him to establish his garden. Louis set up an extensive chemistry laboratory in the attic of the house (believed by some to help fill the void after his wife Ann's death in 1826) and wrote private treatises on mathematics (solving proofs for his son's college professor). He happily took botanists and horticulturists on plant finding expeditions, provided comparative specimens to botanists and his brother (including insects and mollusks), and engaged in hybridizing experiments. He possessed a brilliant, self-determined mind, ever self-effacing.



Photo by S. Catron.

Narcissus tazetta 'Grand Primo' at LeConte-Woodmanston Plantation and Botanical Garden.

It is Louis' plant collecting and collection of bulbs that gained him renown, particularly bulbs from the Cape of Good Hope. Louis grew an impressive array, larger than the gardens at Charleston or Harvard, and comparable to Dr. Hosack's (who grew more lilies while Louis grew more *Narcissus*). A synopsis of previously recorded data for the years 1813 through 1815 was saved in the papers of John Lawrence LeConte, son of John. Covering thirty-nine species (one species represented by two strains), the list gives date ranges of germination, flowering, and hibernation (senescence). [Interestingly, a few lack "hibernation" dates, suggestive of recent plantings.] The general agreement of LeConte descendants is that this synopsis is actually in John's handwriting. The original data probably was recorded by Louis, however, as John would return North after the winter during these years. Sadly many of the family's research papers, including Louis', were lost during the Civil War.

Louis' son Joseph reminisced about his father and his garden, "... this garden was used only for scientific study and refined enjoyment. It was the never-ceasing delight of the children. The tenderest memories cluster around it, especially about the image of our father in his daily walks there after breakfast, sipping his last cup of coffee, enjoying its beauty, planning improvements, and directing the labor of the old negro gardener, 'Daddy Dick'." (Anderson 1981: 798)

The Scottish botanical collector Alexander Gordon often wrote of his visits to Louis' garden, remarking upon his collection of camellias and amaryllids. In 1827-28 Gordon made a 1,200 mile tour through America visiting nurserymen and gardens. An abridged version of his correspondence during this period, published in John Loudon's influential *The Gardener's Magazine*, oddly makes no mention of the LeContes. [Was it possibly edited out?] His writings of 1832 and 1840 take great pains to mention both of the LeConte brothers and Louis' garden, as well as the number of new plants the LeContes provided to Gordon in the past. "The Garden of Lewis le Conte, Esq. ... is decidedly the richest in bulbs I have ever seen; and their luxuriance would astonish those who have only seen them in the confined state in which we are obliged to grow them in this country. M. LeConte has discovered many new plants; and through this kindness I have been enabled to enrich our collections with some splendid treasures." (Gordon 1832: 297)

As to be expected with a plant collector, evidence suggests Louis expanded his bulb collection over the years, coming from not only Alexander Gordon but John LeConte as well. In 1840, Gordon expounded upon the suitability of the entire family of *Amaryllidaceae*

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Louis LeConte's Bulb Garden.....(continued from page 3)

to southern gardens, “The garden of my valued friend, the late Lewis LeConte, Esq., presented a convincing proof how peculiarly they were adapted for southern gardens. The bulbs attain an astonishing size, with a corresponding magnitude in the size and number of their blossoms. I have seen from six to ten offsets, taken from an *Amaryllis Johnsonii*, each offset measuring from fifteen to twenty inches in circumference.” (Gordon 1840: 233) *Hippeastrum x johnsonii* was first introduced in England in 1799, spurring a number of botanists to try to confirm that the bulb was indeed a hybrid, including Louis LeConte – one of the first in America to do so.

In 1830, John LeConte published a short monograph on *Pancratium*, addressing four North American species based on several years of close study: *Pancratium mexicanum*, *P. rotatum*, *P. coronarium*, and *P. occidentale*. While he discussed all the plants as they appeared in the wild, for *P. rotatum* he closed with, “It seems to thrive better in a garden than in its native situation.” (John LeConte 1830: 144) Of *P. mexicanum*, he stated “. . . but grows extremely well in the dry soil of the garden” (John LeConte 1830: 143-144). Of *P. occidentale*, “it is, however, very readily propagated by seeds” (John LeConte 1830: 146). Presumably Louis was growing these bulbs at Woodmanston, rather than John growing them up North in a greenhouse. Further, only *P. mexicanum* appears on the 1813-1815 list (*P. maritimum* is a Mediterranean plant).

Louis’ daughters Jane Harden and Ann Stevens became locally noted gardeners in their own right. The familial recollections of their gardens obliquely reflect Louis’ gardening and influence in the area. Jane maintained her own garden at her nearby home in Halifax from 1843 until 1869, when she moved to California. In 1922, Jane’s niece wrote about her recollections of Aunt

Jane’s garden during the antebellum days. Along with camellias, azaleas, and tea olives, she stated Jane grew daffodils, jonquils, narcissi, and other kinds of bulbs. (Anderson 1981: 892) Ann’s abandoned garden in nearby Walthourville was described in 1930, some seventy years after her passing. *Wisteria ran riot*, thousands of *Leucojum vernum* (likely *L. aestivum*) were naturalized along with jonquils, and old flower beds were still outlined with “*Iris Florentine alba*.” (Anderson 1981: 958)

The design of Louis’ garden and the method by which he organized its contents are unknown. John Loudon, however, offered clues as to the thinking of sophisticated gardeners of the time. Addressing the “bulbous root parterre,” Loudon pointed out that it required a layout “somewhat different, in form and design. . . . The general form ought to be regular. It may be a square, a circle, or oval, divided into compartments, and each of these laid out into beds of three or four feet broad.” (Loudon 1806: 341) Further, the “botanic parterre” may be “arranged either by the sexual or the natural systems of Linnaeus, or by the natural system of Jussieu,* or any other author. These may be planted either in beds—as is commonly done when the Linnaean system is followed—or in irregular masses when any natural arrangement is adopted.” (Loudon 1806: 343)

Loudon reflected a shift in botanic garden design that emerged in the early 1800s. Prior to this, botanic gardens such as John Bartram’s “The New Flower Garden” (ca. 1758) in Philadelphia, and the “Hortus Medicus,” (ca. 1751) in Salem, North Carolina were almost strictly utilitarian, with narrow rectangular beds set in overall rectangular forms, with only one to two varieties per bed. (Granted the Hortus Medicus did have a section in an ornamental parterre motif.) William Curtis’ first London Botanic Garden at Lambeth Marsh in 1779 appears to



Photo courtesy of Greg Grant, SFA Gardens, Nacogdoches, Texas.

St. Joseph’s Lily, *Hippeastrum x johnsonii*.



Photo by Bill Welch.

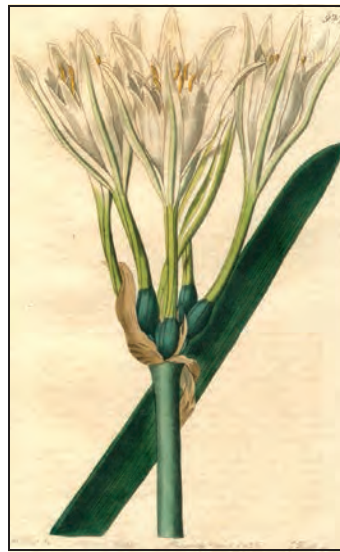
‘Alba Plena’ camellia at LeConte Plantation.

have been similarly rectangular in overall pattern, much like the Chelsea Physic Garden. A watercolor of his garden circa 1787 (on-line courtesy of the Bridgeman Art Library www.bridgemanart.org) illustrates narrow rectangular beds, bordered and possibly slightly raised, with plants well-spaced apart. His second garden at Brampton was similarly very rectilinear in pattern.

William Salisbury took over Curtis' botanic garden upon his death in 1799. By relocating it to Sloane Street, Salisbury created a new design idea that was soon emulated by both English and American botanists. Rectangular beds were encompassed by winding walks through trees and shrubs, combining aesthetic sensibilities for the public with scientific utility for the student. This was the latest style Hosack referenced in 1801; William Peck likely visited it when touring London gardens for modeling Harvard's botanic garden.

Other botanic gardens styled in this design of rectilinear utility, wreathed by curvilinear paths and intertwined with shrubs and trees, were the Cambridge Botanic Garden (England) painted circa 1815 (courtesy of the Bridgeman Art Library, www.bridgemanart.org); Charles Willson Peale's private garden Belfield near Philadelphia, painted circa 1816 (O'Malley 1996: 209); and the Botanic Garden at Cambridge (Harvard), drawn circa 1807 (currently reproduced on-line at huh.harvard.edu/libraries/Gray_Bicent/harvard_professor).

Moreover, the Elgin Botanic Garden, which may have guided Louis when he set out his own botanic garden and arranged his plants, adhered to this new model. When first setting out to explain and promote the garden, Hosack painted an enticing picture echoing Curtis' motif, "The grounds are also arranged and planted agreeably to the most approved st[y]le of ornamental gardening.... In extending his walks to the garden, on each side, he is equally gratified and instructed by the numerous plants which are here associated in scientific order, for the information of the student in Botany or Medicine." (Hosack 1802: 2) Hosack encircled the garden with trees and shrubs and then a stone wall, to lend an air of the



Pancratium maritimum, Edwards' *Botanical Register*, Plate 927, 1825.



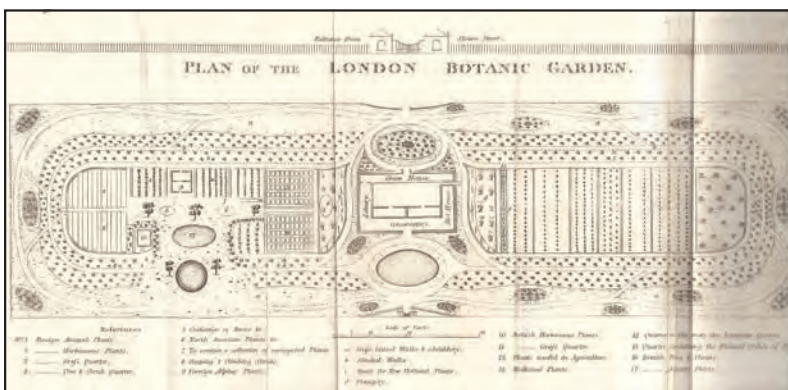
Narcissus incomparabilis, Peerless Daffodil. *The Botanical Magazine*, Plate 121, 1790.

pleasure garden to what otherwise was a very scientific and utilitarian venture. To date, no documents survive that intimate how utilitarian in design Louis' garden was.

Presumably Louis spaced his bulbs rather far apart, in keeping with the mode of the day. This would have facilitated record keeping, as farther spaced specimens are easier to keep sorted out. That the 1813-1815 list is only numbered for the first twelve plants suggests Louis did not number his plants either. In contrast, the 1818 catalog for the Botanic Garden, Cambridge, Massachusetts, specifically states, "The first column in this catalogue is the number placed by the plant in the garden; the second column is the Latin name; the third, the English name..." (Peck 1818: iv) Perhaps because Louis did not have a great many visitors to his garden, he had no need for numbers as guides to the plants he knew so well.

How Louis arranged the placement order of plants in his botanic garden poses another conundrum. Other American botanic gardens followed either Linnaeus (at least in their catalogs) or designated two sections for the systems of Linnaeus and Jussieu. Judging by the 1818 catalog for the Botanic Garden, Cambridge and the 1810 catalog for the Botanic Garden of South Carolina, these gardens followed strictly a Linnaean system for not only intellectual description but plant arrangement as well. (The South Carolina Botanic Garden specifically cited as its guiding authority Turton's 1806 edition of Linnaeus' *A General System of Nature*.) The 1811 catalog for the Elgin Botanic Garden, however, provided for both botanic systems of description and arrangement, likely following the lead of the London Botanic Garden (which Hosack cited as a leading botanic institution in the education of American botanists

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Frontispiece of William Curtis' London Botanic Garden at Lambeth Marsh, 1779. Plate from William Salisbury, *The Botanists' Companion*. Vol. 1, 1816.

in his reasoning for establishing such a garden in the United States). As Louis and John learned botany from Dr. Hosack, and Louis was known to be unwaveringly intellectually independent, Hosack's methodology likely carried more gravitas than the coeval garden in Charleston: "For this purpose the grounds are divided into different compartments, calculated to exhibit the various plants according to their several properties: and these again are so arranged as to afford a practical illustration of the systems of botany at present most esteemed, viz. the sexual system of *Linnaeus*, and the natural orders of *Jussieu*.* (Hosack 1811: vii)

Joseph LeConte may provide the key insight of his father's intellectual proclivity for Jussieu over Linnaeus. "I remember, moreover, that he entirely ignored the custom of the botanists of that time and anticipated the natural classification. He always preferred to speak of plants in connection with the natural rather than the Linnaean system. In speaking of a plant, he would give the Linnaean order, and then add, 'but it belongs to a natural order of such a plant,' giving the typical genus." (Joseph LeConte 1903: 11) [By the 1830s, the Jussieu natural system had replaced the Linnaean system, embodied in John Loudon's arabesque design of the Birmingham Botanic Garden in 1831].

Yet the list of 1813-1815 followed neither the order of Linnaeus nor that of Jussieu. Species are together by genus, and some disparate genus' fall together by the group Linnaeus and Jussieu agreed upon (iris). The preponderance of spring bulbs come first, and most of the summer bloomers afterwards. But it seems like they are simply in order of what he liked. Now whether that order is what Louis liked or what John liked, and does this order reflect how the bulbs were arranged and planted in the garden or even the relative order in which they were acquired, we will never know.

The site was acquired by the Garden Club of Georgia in 1977, while title was transferred to The LeConte-Woodmanston Foundation in 1993. It has remained, however, a project of the Garden Club of Georgia. In 2008, to assist in the establishment of a period-specific garden, the Georgia Daffodil Society, Georgia Iris Society, and Florida Daffodil Society donated to the Foundation daffodils and iris specified on the 1813-1815 list. The Foundation added to this in 2012, and more spring season cultivars from the 1813-1815 list were donated in 2013.

*[Antoine Laurent de Jussieu (1748 – 1836), a French botanist, was the first to publish a "natural" classification system of flowering plants in *Genera Plantarum* (1789). He retained Linnaeus' binomial naming structure, but used groups of characteristics to aggregate like plants, rather than relying solely upon the sexual structure of a plant's flowers.]

Woodmanston Bulb List 1813-1815

1. *N. papyraceus* [*Narcissus papyraceus*]
2. *N. papyraceus* [*N. papyraceus*]
3. *N. tazetta* [*N. tazetta*]
4. *N. jonquilla* [*N. jonquilla*]
5. *N. odorus* [*N. × odorus*]
6. *N. incomparabilis* [*N. × incomparabilis*]
7. *N. incomparabilis* (fl. pl. pal.) ['Sulphur Phoenix' or 'Orange Phoenix']
8. *N. incomparabilis* (fl. pl. lut.) ['Butter and Eggs']
9. *N. pseudo-narcissus* [*N. pseudonarcissus*]
10. *N. pseudo-narcissus* (fl. pl.) [*N. pseudonarcissus* 'Plenus']
11. *N. minor* (fl. pl.) ['Rip van Winkle']
12. *N. poeticus* (fl. pl.) [*N. poeticus* 'Plenus' or "Albus Plenus Odoratus"]
13. *Leucojum aestivum* [*Leucojum aestivum*]
14. *Crocus Sativus* [*Crocus sativus*]
15. *Iris Xiphium* [*Iris xiphium*]
16. *I. Xiphoides* [*I. xiphoides*]
17. *I. Persica* [*I. persica*]
18. *Gladiolus Segetum* [*Gladiolus segetum*]
19. *G. Communis* [*G. communis*]
20. *G. Imbricatus* [*G. imbricatus*]
21. *Hyacinthus Orientalis* (fl. sem. coer.) [Dutch semi-double hyacinth]
22. *H. Orientalis* (fl. pl.) [Dutch double hyacinth]
23. *H. Muscari* [possibly *Muscari moschatum*]
24. *H. Racemosus* [*M. racemosum*]
25. *H. Botryoides* [*M. botryoides*]
26. *H. Comosus* (mon.) [*M. comosum*]
27. *H. Comosus* (mon. var.) [*M. comosum plumosum*]
28. *Lillium Candidum* [*Lilium candidum*]
29. *L. Bulbiferum* [*L. bulbiferum*]
30. *L. Superbum* [*L. superbum*]
31. *Scilla Hyacinthoides* [possibly *Hyacinthoides hispanicus*?]
32. *Ornithogalum Umbellatum* [*Ornithogalum umbellatum*]
33. *O. Stachyoides* [*O. pyrenaicum*]
34. *Amaryllis Lutea* [*Sternbergia lutea*]
35. *A. Belladonna* [*Amaryllis belladonna*]
36. *A. Atamasco* [*Zephyranthes atamasco*]
37. *A. Formosissima* [*Sprekelia formosissima*]
38. *A. Equestris* [*Hippeastrum equestre*]
39. *Pancratium Maritimum* [*Pancratium maritimum*]
40. *P. Mexicanum* [*P. mexicanum*]

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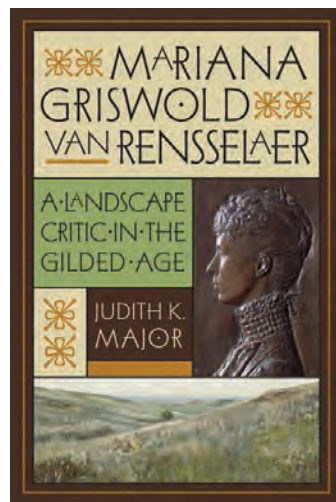
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Book Review

Mariana Griswold Van Rensselaer: A Landscape Critic in the Gilded Age, by Judith K. Major. University of Virginia Press | hardcover, 304 pages | 2013, ISBN 9780813933924 | list price \$45.

With the publication of *Mariana Griswold Van Rensselaer: A Landscape Critic in the Gilded Age* Judith K. Major restores to prominence the work of a remarkable figure in American landscape and garden history. Until recently Mariana Griswold Van Rensselaer was a name little recognized except by those who prize copies of her *Art Out-of-Doors: Hints on Good Taste in Gardening*, published in 1893, and scholars working in the field of the late-nineteenth century. But for some twenty years, from the late 1870s through 1897, her name appeared under the titles of topical and critical articles on art, architecture, and landscape gardening in periodicals including *American Architect and Building News*, *Harper's*, *Lippincott's*, *Century*, the *Atlantic*, the *North American Review*, and the short-lived *American Art Review*.

During this period she also produced two landmark



studies. On the encouragement of Frederick Law Olmsted (1822-1903) and Charles Sprague Sargent (1841-1927), the founding director of the Arnold Arboretum, she wrote *Henry Hobson Richardson and His Works*, a monograph published in 1888, two years after the celebrated architect's death. Her article, "Frederick Law Olmsted," published in *Century Illustrated Monthly Magazine* (October 1893) is described by Laura Wood Roper in *FLO: A Biography of Frederick Law Olmsted* as "the most comprehensive that had appeared until that time on Olmsted and his work." Ironically, it appeared less than two years before Olmsted began his sad, debilitating descent into senile dementia in spring 1895.

She is more widely recognized, however, as a prolific contributor to *Garden and Forest*, a weekly magazine launched on 29 February 1888 under the aegis of Mr. Sargent and the managing editor William Augustus Stiles (1837-1897). Many, many articles appeared under her name, individually or as a series. However, Judith K. Major has identified some 333 unsigned editorials and articles in *Garden and Forest* that she attributes to Mrs. Van Rensselaer on the basis of style and content. They are listed by date of publication, beginning on 7 March 1888 and ending on 29 December 1897, in "Appendix A" of this new book. Her discovery was both a part of and an impetus to Ms. Kraft's scholarship that produced this exemplary biography.

The aristocratic lilt of her name, Mariana Griswold Van Rensselaer, and that of her married identity, Mrs.

(continued on page 8)

Book Review.....(continued from page 7)

Schuyler Van Rensselaer, mark her as a member of the old New York Society chronicled in the novels of her contemporary, Edith Wharton (1862-1937). The daughter of George Griswold Jr. (1820-1884) and Lydia Alley Griswold (1826-1908), Mariana Alley Griswold was born in New York City in 1851. In 1854 the Griswold family moved into a handsome new mansion at 91 Fifth Avenue and resided there until May 1868 when the family moved to Dresden. She was married in Dresden in March 1873 to Schuyler Van Rensselaer (1845-1884) and in May 1873 they returned to the United States and established themselves in New Brunswick, New Jersey. The couple had one known child, a son, George Griswold Van Rensselaer (1875-1894).

The circumstances of her birth, the comfort of status, a privileged upbringing and, most especially, the experience of living in Dresden for five years, as well as fluency in French and German, provided Mariana Griswold Van Rensselaer with an educated, cosmopolitan perspective. She was also widely-read in art, science, and philosophy, including the writings of Mrs. Anna Brownell Jameson, John Ruskin, Matthew Arnold, Hippolyte Taine, Charles Darwin, Alexander von Humboldt, as well as Henry David Thoreau and John Burroughs. Judith K. Major outlines the influence of these authors in the chapter on the education of Mrs. Van Rensselaer, who she aptly describes as “An unfailingly curious woman,” one who “did not cease to marvel and to learn about the arts, . . . embraced science for what it added to her understanding of nature,” and “moved effortlessly from art to architecture to landscape gardening.” She was, in sum, remarkably well-prepared to take up the role of critic.

As the title indicates, Ms. Major’s focus in these pages is directed to Mrs. Van Rensselaer’s career as a writer and critic over a score of years, particularly her contributions to *Garden and Forest*, in a life that ended just short of four score and three. In six of the nine chapters, she traces her development as a writer, thinker, and critic, expanding her embrace of interests from art to architecture to landscape gardening and incorporating all three in the best of her writings on landscape gardening, which she championed as an art, and the work of the gardener, at its best, as that of an artist. In this, she believed, Olmsted had no living peer. Judith Major’s analysis of Mrs. Van Rensselaer’s writings builds to a fascinating examination of the text of *Art Out-of-Doors: Hints on Good Taste in Gardening* and the published articles that she revised, amended, or otherwise refashioned for inclusion therein. Published in May 1893, when Mariana Griswold Van Rensselaer was just forty-two, *Art Out-of-Doors* can be seen as the capstone of a life’s work, together with her writings on

the World’s Columbian Exposition, which opened to the public on 1 May 1893.

Mariana Griswold Van Rensselaer continued her career as a writer and landscape critic for another four years, contributing one of the last of her articles to the final issue of *Garden and Forest* that ceased publication at the end of December 1897. Although described as being “highbrow” and “high class” at a time when the excesses of the Gilded Age were also widely, rightly criticized, the actual demise of *Garden and Forest* followed on the death of its bachelor managing editor William Augustus Stiles (1837-1897) on 6 October 1897. The two had worked closely as professionals for the near decade of the magazine’s existence. His death followed on that of her son, George Griswold Van Rensselaer, in April 1894 and a year later the onset of illness that claimed the last years of Frederick Law Olmsted, whose respect and friendship she had prized since their first meeting in 1883.

These events figured heavily in the dramatic change of course Mariana Griswold Van Rensselaer made in her life in the last years of the nineteenth century, when also, in 1899, “landscape gardening” was supplanted by “landscape architecture” by practitioners in the field who formalized their association by organizing the American Society of Landscape Architects. Judith Major opens “Changes,” the penultimate chapter of her book, with a simple, but weighted sentence: “Van Rensselaer devoted the remainder of her life to public service and to writing poetry, short stories, and a history of New York.” Her *History of the City of New York in the Seventeenth Century* was published in 1909. “Changes” was also the title of a chapter Mrs. Van Rensselaer added to the 1925 reprint of *Art Out-of-Doors* in which she addressed actions and events that had occurred in the American landscape since 1893. It was her last important landscape essay. She died at home, at 9 West 10th Street, on 20 January 1934, and was buried in Green-Wood Cemetery in Brooklyn.

In her introduction to *Mariana Griswold Van Rensselaer* Judith K. Major wrote of her aim “to establish Van Rensselaer as one of the most significant figures in late-nineteenth-century landscape architecture.” She might better have described her goal as seeking “to re-establish recognition of Mrs. Van Rensselaer as one of the most significant figures in late-nineteenth-century (American) landscape architecture.” That, as Ms. Major convinces us anew in this biography, is a distinction she had earned in her lifetime.

Davyd Foard Hood
Isinglass
Vale, North Carolina

SGHS Annual Meeting in Savannah



Photo by P. Mathewes

Friday afternoon tours included visits to six town gardens within walking distance from the DeSoto Hotel. The gathering is standing at the entrance to the Andrew Low-Colonial Dames House and Garden.



Photo by P. Mathewes

Friday's reception and dinner was held in the gardens of the Ships of the Sea Museum-Scarborough House. The 1819 Greek Revival house was built for one of the principal owners of the Savannah, the first steamship to cross the Atlantic.



Photo by Bill Welch

The Coastal Georgia Botanical Gardens (The Bamboo Farm) was on the Saturday tour. Savannah Meeting coordinator Lucy Hitch enjoyed the 'Frank Hauser' camellia in the Judge Arthur Solomon Camellia Trail.



Photo by P. Mathewes

Members gather in front of the classically designed library at Wormsloe, which housed the 4,000-item DeRenne Collection of rare books and manuscripts relating to Georgia and the Confederacy. The collection was moved to the UGA library in Athens in the early 1930s.



Photo by P. Mathewes

The Cope-Jaakkola house, built in 1868, has been the private residence of Jack and Kitty Cope since 1936. Members explore the grounds below towering live oaks draped with Spanish moss.



Photo by P. Mathewes

Mounds of *Leucojum aestivum* in the foreground, as members prepared for the final meal of Lowcountry fare at Lebanon Plantation.

Southern Garden History Society Members Receive Awards

At the 2014 annual meeting held in Savannah, Georgia, three members received awards from the Southern Garden History Society for their contributions to the society and dedication to the study and preservation of historic gardens and landscapes in the South.

Frances Drane Inglis of Edenton, North Carolina received the **2014 Certificate of Merit* of the Southern Garden History Society**. Edenton is a historic and picturesque town located on the Chowan River in northeastern North Carolina. Long known for its preservation efforts and fine examples of historic homes, churches, and community buildings, Edenton today reflects the efforts of numerous citizens working diligently to preserve its past. Frances Inglis, in turn, has led the way toward the preservation and restoration of Edenton's historic gardens.

Appointed by the governor, Frances has been a member of the Edenton Historical Commission since 2001. A guiding force on the 1758 Cupola House Association, moreover, she has chaired its garden committee for the past thirty years. In that role she has led the volunteer effort to restore the eighteenth-century garden at the Cupola House, one of the region's premier historic sites. She also has championed efforts to restore and preserve the historic landscape at Somerset Place Historic Site.

In the 1980s, Frances became the steward of her family's home, the Homestead, and its garden. Through research and scholarship, she created a garden that honors its surviving specimens. Frequent travels have enriched her garden, and her close friendships with noted gardeners have inspired it. The resulting effort has created a garden that is an integral part of the 240-year-old house it now surrounds. Frances Inglis is a dedicated Southern gardener who always seems most at home in her garden

Dr. A. Jefferson Lewis III (Jeff Lewis) of Athens, Georgia was named an **Honorary Director of the**

Southern Garden History Society. Jeff Lewis served as President of the Southern Garden History Society from 2008 to 2010. During his presidency, he hosted a successful annual meeting in Athens, Georgia, with his colleague, the late Jim Cothran, and wisely presided over the daily business of running the organization.

In addition to his many years of service and leadership on the board of directors, Dr. Lewis guided the Southern Garden History Society through a transition from its longstanding home with the offices of Old Salem, Inc. in North Carolina to its present configuration as a freestanding, non-profit organization with a professional staff. Due to his wisdom, patience, and even-handed guidance, this seminal change was smooth and positive. The society has continued to thrive, which is a fitting testament to the success of Dr. Lewis' leadership.

Moreover, Dr. Lewis is interested in all aspects of Southern culture, and has an in-depth knowledge of historic Southern plants and gardens. He is the author of *Historic, Heritage and Heirloom Plants of Georgia and the American South: A Collection of Short Essays on Plants and Crops of Historic and Socioeconomic Interest and Importance* (2004) and is Director Emeritus of The State Botanical Garden of Georgia.

Gail Collman Griffin was awarded the prestigious **Flora Ann Bynum Medal**; the highest honor bestowed by the Southern Garden History Society. It is not awarded annually, but only occasionally to

recipients who have rendered outstanding service to the society. Winners of the Flora Ann Bynum Medal are: Flora Ann Bynum (2005), Peggy Cornett (2008), and Peter J. Hatch (2012).

Gail Griffin's contributions are many. Since joining the society board in 1998, she has played an active role in the organization's most important and essential programs, notably as advisor on the planning committees for two annual meetings at George Washington's Mount Vernon



Frances Inglis awarded the Certificate of Merit from out-going president Staci Catron.



Jeff Lewis awarded Honorary Board Member.

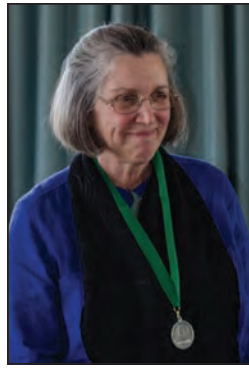
Photos by P. Mathewes

(2000 and 2010). Additionally, her efforts in organizing annual meetings have resulted in a SGHS annual meeting manual. Via that manual, therefore, as well as through her ever-present role as society treasurer, Griffin has been an essential supporter for all annual meetings for the past ten years.

In 2006, Griffin was elected society Vice President and in keeping with normal board progression, would have become president. Yet, after Flora Ann Bynum's death in the spring of 2006, she offered to assume the often burdensome responsibilities of treasurer. In her role as administrator of the society's finances, her organizational skills and attention to detail have ably managed and guided the group through complex financial transitions smoothly and seamlessly.

Gail Griffin was hired in 1997 as first female director of gardens and grounds at Dumbarton Oaks, thus becoming responsible for one of the premier twentieth-century gardens in America. The landscape department at Dumbarton Oaks, moreover, had previously operated under the leadership of only two superintendents since the garden became public in the 1940s under the Trustees for Harvard University. Due to a combination intelligence, grace, and savoir faire, Griffin achieved a successful move into her vital role at Dumbarton Oaks. Through her resilience and leadership over the past decade and a half, Griffin continues to inspire. Her achievements at Dumbarton Oaks were most recently celebrated in June 2013 when she received the Harvard Hero Award.

Gail Griffin has rendered outstanding service to the Southern Garden History Society. Her membership for many years, combined with her connection through her in-laws (Florence and Bill Griffin), who were instrumental



Gail Griffin after receiving the Flora Ann Bynum Medal.

in the establishment of the society, has endowed her with an important institutional memory. Flora Ann Bynum gave tirelessly to all aspects of the Southern Garden History Society's mission and her dedication and commitment led to the ultimate success of the society. Gail Griffin embodies all of the superior qualities of Flora Ann Bynum and her effort and countless hours for the good of the society are unmatched.

[Drawn from the nomination letters and letters of support for each recipient]

Student Scholarships* Awarded at Savannah Annual Meeting. Six students from a variety of programs and levels of experience applied for 2014 annual meeting scholarships. The society awarded two, both to graduate students at The University of Georgia's College of Environment and Design (CED). Paul Cady is a second year Master of Landscape Architecture student currently working with the CED Cultural Landscape Lab on a cultural landscape report for Wormsloe Plantation in Savannah. He was previously a horticulturist at both Filoli, a National Trust for Historic Preservation property south of San Francisco, and Longue Vue House and Gardens, in New Orleans, where he researched period planting plans.

The James R. Cothran Scholarship went to Adam Martin, a second year Master of Historic Preservation student whose thesis seeks to identify how and why since circa 1900 people have preserved heirloom or heritage bulbs in the United States. He has a strong interest in heirloom plants and has taken landscape preservation-related courses at CED toward the Historic Landscape Certificate.

**The SGHS Awards and Scholarships are described on the back cover of Magnolia. For further details and directions for submitting applications, visit southerngardenhistory.org, or contact the editor.*

Members in the News

The **Anne Spencer Museum and Garden** was featured in a February 6 *New York Times* article by Penelope Green: "Preserving the Past One Layer at a Time: The Life of a Poet Allergic to Endings." The lengthy article highlights Anne Spencer's life, poetry, her association with the Harlem Renaissance movement, her home, and her restored garden in Lynchburg, Virginia. Today the garden is maintained by the **Hillside Garden Club**. The article is illustrated with interior and exterior photos by John M. Hall.

Society Loses Friend and Supporter

We recently learned that Janet "Weej" Broderson

died on March 14, 2014. Weej lived most of her life in Virginia but move to Tallahassee, Florida in the early 1980s. She coordinated the 1997 Southern Garden History Society meeting held in Tallahassee, and in 2010, she received the society's Certificate of Merit for her contributions toward preserving the historic gardens and landscapes at Goodwood Museum and Gardens. Weej was a long-time member of the society who was known for bringing numerous Tallahassee friends, also known as "Weej's Girls," with her to the annual meetings. She will be missed by all who were fortunate to know her.



Southern Garden History Society

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Awards and Scholarships

The **Flora Ann Bynum Award** is the highest award bestowed by the Southern Garden History Society. It is not awarded annually, but only occasionally to recipients who have rendered outstanding service to the society. Nominations may be made at any time by any member. The award will usually be presented at the annual meeting.

The title **Honorary Director** (Board of Directors) may be bestowed on individuals who have rendered exceptional service and made significant contributions to the society. Nominations for Honorary Director are made to the President by current Board members and are approved by the Board of Directors.

The **Certificate of Merit** is presented to a member or non-member, whose work has advanced the mission and goals of the society. Awarding of certificates will be approved by the Board of Directors and will usually be announced at the annual meeting.

Society **Scholarships** assist students in attending the society's annual meeting and are awarded to bona fide students enrolled in college and university majors relevant to the mission and goals of the society. The scholarship provides a waiver of registration fees plus \$500 to assist with travel and lodging.

Details, requirements, and directions for submitting applications are posted on the SGHS Web site: www.southerngardenhistory.org. For those without internet access, a copy of this document can be mailed or faxed. Contact Peggy Cornett, Magnolia editor.

Annual Membership Dues

The society's membership year is from **August 1—July 31**. The membership secretary will mail renewal notices in the summer for the 2013-2014 year. Membership categories:

Benefactor	\$500
Patron	\$250
Sustainer	\$100
Institution or Business	\$75
Joint	\$50
Individual	\$30
Student	\$15

For more membership information, contact:
Virginia Hart, Membership Coordinator
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Email: membership@southerngardenhistory.org
Memberships can now be made electronically on our Web site!
www.southerngardenhistory.org

Deadline for submitting articles for the Spring issue of Magnolia is May 2, 2014.

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