



MAGNOLIA

Bulletin of the
Southern Garden
History Society

"The Laurel Tree of Carolina"
from Mark Catesby, 1731
(MAGNOLIA GRANDIFLORA)

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ANNUAL MEETING 1990

Within a week or ten days all members should have received registration materials for the Society's annual meeting at Mount Vernon, Virginia, May 18-20 (Friday noon through Sunday afternoon). If you fail to receive your information, notify the Secretary-Treasurer at our Old Salem address, or call Dean Norton at Mount Vernon, (703) 780-7262. We await eagerly the tours of the Mount Vernon estate and the Sunday visits to important and beautiful gardens in the nation's capital. Every effort will be made to accommodate members who wish to attend, but early registration is recommended.

ANOTHER REGIONAL GARDEN HISTORY SOCIETY

In early fall, 1989, the SGHS headquarters received a call from Walter T. Punch, Director of the Library, Massachusetts Horticulture Society, Boston. Mr. Punch requested information about the Southern Garden History Society for a group of people interested in forming a New England garden history society. Our secretary-treasurer, Flora Ann Bynum, sent him the society bylaws, back issues of Magnolia, membership brochures, and other information. (So far as we are aware, our Southern Garden History Society was the first regional society of its kind, and up to now has been the only functioning garden history society in the United States, except for local groups.) We are proud to serve as a model for others, and glad to know about other persons and groups which share our interests.

CALENDAR

March 6, 13, 20, and 27, 1990 (Tuesdays) Lecture series: "Exploring Virginia's Agricultural Heritage," at the Museum of American Frontier Culture, Staunton, VA. Call(703) 332-7850 for information.

March 16-17, 1990 (Friday-Saturday) "A Union of Spirits: a Conference for Interpreters," at Farmers' Museum, P.O. Box 800, Cooperstown, New York 13326; tel. (607) 547-5431. Co-sponsored by Mid-Atlantic and New England groups of ALHFAM (Association for Living Historical Farms and Agricultural Museums).

May 18-20, 1990 (Friday afternoon through Sunday evening) SGHS annual meeting at Mount Vernon. Registration will be limited to 125 participants; members should prepare now to respond promptly to the information packet that they will receive very soon.

May 31-June 2, 1990 (Thursday-Saturday) Conference on plantation life in Virginia during the late 18th and early 19th centuries, co-sponsored by the Thomas Jefferson Memorial Foundation, University of Virginia, and the Institute of Early American History and Culture. For information, write Stephen Innes, Corcoran Dept. of History, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA 22903; or telephone the Institute of Early American History and Culture at (804) 221-1110.

June 9-10, 1990 (Saturday-Sunday) The Heritage Rose Foundation will meet at the Brooklyn Botanic Garden. For information write Charles A. Walker, Jr., 1512 Gorman St., Raleigh, N.C. 27606.

June 16-21, 1990 (Saturday-Thursday) Annual meeting of Association for Living Historical Farms and Agricultural Museums, at Brown University, Providence, Rhode Island. For information contact the program committee, c/o Bob Benz, Billings Farm and Museum, P.O. Box 489, Woodstock, VT 05091; tel. (802) 457-2355.

April 14-16, 1991 (Friday-Sunday) Annual meeting of Southern Garden History Society. Plan ahead to join us out west on the Mississippi, in St. Francisville, Baton Rouge, and New Orleans, Louisiana.

October 3-5, 1991 (Thursday afternoon through Saturday morning) Biennial conference on "Restoring Southern Gardens and Landscapes" at Old Salem. For information: Old Salem Inc., Box F, Salem Station, Winston-Salem, N.C. 27108; tel. (919) 721-7344.

HURRICANE RESTORATION FUND--AN APPEAL FOR HELP

Middleton Place, the 18th-century plantation home of Arthur Middleton, a signer of the Declaration of Independence, was devastated by Hurricane Hugo. Although structures were spared major destruction, damage to the gardens was especially severe. Hundreds of trees were destroyed, and many others need professional care to survive. Your tax-deductible donations are sought to help with repairs and replanting: Middleton Place Foundation, Hurricane Restoration Fund, Ashley River Road, Charleston, S.C. 29414. Tel. (803) 556-6020.

THE CHEROKEE GARDEN CLUB OF ATLANTA: ITS GARDEN LIBRARY,
DESIGNATED DEPOSITORY OF SOUTHERN GARDEN HISTORY SOCIETY ARCHIVES
information from Anne C. Carr (Mrs. Julian S., Sr.),
a member of the garden club and a member of the
Southern Garden History Society board of directors

People involved in restoration of old homes in the South can usually find authentic materials for renewing a structure; but it has been difficult, and at times nearly impossible, to get information on how to duplicate early gardens.

In 1973, Atlanta's Cherokee Garden Club realized the need for a comprehensive garden library in their city and thereupon voted to develop such a resource. Knowing that horticulture history relates to the history of people, the Atlanta Historical Society asked that the library be housed in its splendid new archives building, McElreath Hall. A charter was drawn up which reads: "The purpose of the library is the conservation and dissemination of educational and research information for the gardening and horticultural community of the South-eastern United States."

Today the library consists of over 3000 volumes, magazines, catalogues, and periodicals. The flavor of the collection is primarily American, then Southern, with a number of significant English and French volumes, as well as books on the Oriental influence on our choice of plants and flowers. Our collection includes books on important English landscape architects of the 18th and 19th centuries, along with those of Humphry Repton, Gertrude Jekyll, and Andre Michaux, as well as Philip Miller, whose 18th-century volume, The Gardener's Dictionary, was widely owned and read in the southern United States.

In 1977, the Library moved significantly toward its goal through the involvement of one of the country's most noted garden book collectors and dealers and a member of SGHS as well, Elisabeth Woodburn of Hopewell, New Jersey. For ten years Mrs. Woodburn had painstakingly collected rare American garden books dating from 1634 to 1900. In an address at the Bicentennial Symposium on agricultural literature, in 1975, Charles van Ravenswaay, former director of the Winterthur Museum, remarked, "...Mrs. Woodburn has collected, studied, compared, and physically handled the books she describes. To her, the authors are old friends."

Mrs. Woodburn was seeking a proper home for her carefully nurtured collection, and had refused it to several large collectors, including the Smithsonian Institution. Hearing about the Cherokee Garden Library, she saw that her collection could become the nucleus for a fine horticultural library in an area where farming and gardening had long been an established way of life. Most important to her was that the books would be available to the public through the auspices of the Atlanta Historical Society.

With the encouragement and aid of the Cherokee Garden Club, major grants from foundations, garden clubs, and individuals, the Woodburn Collection on the Historical Development of American Horticulture, made up of 169 titles, came to Atlanta.

These superb books cover a wide range of gardening subjects and document much of our horticultural heritage. Particularly interesting ones include:

Arbustrum Americanum by Humphry Marshall (Philadelphia, 1735), the first book on native trees and shrubs to be published in America. The author was a cousin of John Bartrum.

An Inaugural Botanico-Medical Dissertation by Benjamin Shultz (Philadelphia, 1795). Describes the Phytolacca Decandra of Linnaeus, our common wild-growing pokeweed that Southerners have gathered and cooked for centuries as poke-salad.

Nouveau Jardinier de la Louisiane by J. F. Lelievre (1838), the first book on gardening printed in Louisiana.

The Gardeners Kalendar by Martha Logan (Charleston, 1779), the first American book published on how to garden.

Travels through North and South Carolina, Georgia, East and West Florida by William Bartram (Philadelphia, 1791). Our edition is the London 1792.

The American Herbal, by Samuel Stearns (Walpole, New Hampshire, 1801), the first herbal printed in America.

The Gardener's Calendar for South Carolina, Georgia, and North Carolina by Robert Squibb (Charleston, 1787).

In addition, the Library has a large collection of seed catalogues, including one of the earliest printed in America, by Berckmans, of Fruitland Nursery in Augusta, Georgia.

We have continued to add to our collection. Some recent acquisitions are: --in 1984, a large blueprint collection of one of Georgia's outstanding landscape architects, William Pauley, including work done from the 1920's through the 1950's;

--in 1985, the garden library of Elizabeth Lawrence, the noted columnist of the Charlotte Observer and writer of books on gardening. Elizabeth Lawrence began as a regional writer and became recognized across and country and abroad as an important garden writer of great insight. Included in our collection are Lawrence's personal notes and memoranda found in her books;

--in 1989, the garden library of Louisa Farrand Wood, niece of Beatrix Farrand, the renowned landscape architect of the early 20th century. Mrs. Wood is also a member of SGHS.

In 1989, the Southern Garden History Society voted to designate the Cherokee Garden Library as the depository of its archives. The Garden Club's board of directors is deeply honored, and wishes to invite all members of SGHS to tour the library, located in McElreath Hall at the Atlanta Historical Society, 3101 Andrews Drive, NW, Atlanta, Georgia 30305.

THE DeROSSET GARDEN OF WILMINGTON, NORTH CAROLINA

by E. David Scott, Executive Director,
Historic Wilmington Foundation

Armand John DeRosset III (1807-1897) descended from a family that had been prominent in the history of the Wilmington area since the early 18th century. Like his father, grandfather, and great grandfather, he entered the medical profession. Before the age of thirty, however, he stopped practicing medicine and became a wealthy and successful merchant. In 1841, Dr. DeRosset began construction of his home on the corner of Dock and Second Streets. In the style of the day, it was a Greek Revival structure, with grand Doric columns facing onto a terraced garden. Stylistic changes and additions in 1854 and 1874 produced an Italianate mansion with brackets and cupola, but the columned front porch remained. From that front porch, facing the Cape Fear River just two blocks away, we may view the garden.

Made up of five descending terraces divided by a central walk and enclosed by a brick wall, the sixty-eight foot by ninety foot garden was an important element of the DeRosset estate. Eliza Jane DeRosset, Armand DeRosset's wife, first oversaw the planting and maintenance of the garden, as her letters to her daughters Kate and Alice testify: "There is a perfect rage for gardening down here," she writes Kate, who is attending school in the North, in 1846, and asks her, "If you can get me some Tube roses or any plants that I have not got bring me some."

Wilmington was not a provincial backwater town but a busy port, the largest city in the state of North Carolina, and quite cosmopolitan. It desired to be as stylish and modern as its larger Northern counterparts, as reflected in the furnishings, architecture, and gardens of the time. Eliza struggled with her garden to make it urbane. "Our garden I think looks very pretty," she writes Kate in Boston in 1843, "but I suppose [after] the splendid gardens you have seen you will think quite the contrary."

Eliza's letters, part of a collection of 13,000 family-related letters and documents in the Southern Historical Collection of the University of North Carolina, talk of flowers, vegetables, grapes, a greenhouse, and a "nice little garden engine" for watering. A sampling of these letters invites us back in time to share her garden.

1844: "I hope I will have some handsome trees by the time you return..."

1854: "The grapes are not ripe yet, but as soon as they are I will send you a Champagne basket full by express."

1854: "...it is literally over run with weeds & grass. But will have it all right again soon."

1856: "We have had a few Scuppernong grapes off our vine this summer and as for peaches we have had plenty of them out of our own garden."

1857: "...you never saw the gardens look so forlorn. I fear most of my roses are dead and neither of the Lady Banks will bloom."

1861: "...the weather has been so charming.... it has induced me to go into the garden, and now I feel quite interested again, it is beginning to look beautifully, a quantity of flowers in bloom..."

1876: "My conservatory [just completed in 1874] is looking sweetly-- Calla's have been blooming in abundance for some time, and not waiting for Easter....violets are almost over but jessamins in profusion."

1876: "I have put a great many geranium in the ground which I fear I may lose, those in the Conservatory are blooming most profusely and are elegant, the roses have just begun to bloom but I fear the cold snap will put them back..."

1877: "We have had a splendid vegetable garden....peas & potatoes & spinach & the beets are nearly ready...Our crab apple has blossomed so sweetly this spring."

The DeRosset garden was certainly a multi-faceted gem and an ever-changing one. When we approach the restoration of this garden, we try to do so with an understanding of the person who first planned and planted it. Because a garden changes over time, however, we must view our restoration not as a duplication of a certain frozen moment, but rather as a "representation" of the DeRosset garden in the late nineteenth century.

The Historic Wilmington Foundation purchased the DeRosset House in 1976 to save it from destruction. Our first concern was to stabilize the house. The roof was in a serious state of disrepair and the entire north wall of the house had collapsed. With those problems solved and the exterior of the house restored, we asked ourselves what to do next. We decided that the grounds, because of their high visibility and potential for public use, should be our next task.

The restoration of an historic garden requires the use of many research sources. The archival evidence was searched and analyzed. Photo documentation was reviewed, oral histories examined. The Foundation then requested archaeological investigation to assist us in the reconstruction of the garden.

John Clauser of the Office of State Archaeology, North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, agreed to complete a preliminary investigation of the front yard of the house. The Foundation asked Mr. Clauser to focus on the area directly related to our proposed project, and he agreed, even though excavation of the back yard might have yielded more archaeological evidence, so that we could proceed according to our reconstruction plan.

We established goals before the field work began:

1. Determine what major features should be included in the landscape plan;
2. Provide details for restoration of major landscaping features;
3. Provide clearance for underground lighting and irrigation systems;
4. Provide base information for the development of reasonable restoration goals for future landscape work.

The archaeological investigation gave the Foundation the raw data needed to complete the construction of the terraces, central steps, and north wall. The terrace wall, for example, was discovered to be constructed of dry laid ballast stone and was approximately one foot (two ballast stones) thick. In the subsequent construction of the wall, mortar was required to stabilize it, but the appearance of the original was duplicated.

Investigation of the planting beds indicates that there were square central beds surrounded by a grass path on each of the lower three levels. The limited extent of the archaeology makes the conclusion that all the terraces had similar beds a speculative one. The terrace that was investigated showed clear importation of bedding soils in the central area; as Mr. Clauser put it, "the excavation...suggest(s) purposeful preparation of this area for planting."

The reconstruction of the central walk was based on photographic evidence and on the archaeological work. It has been suggested that the DeRosset walk employed the trick of tapering the path to make the garden appear larger. Mr. Clauser states that this was a fairly common design tool in the 18th and 19th centuries, and that it was based on strict mathematical formulae. Whether the reconstruction of the DeRosset central path accomplished the precise formulae is open to question, but the existence of the central walk and the number of steps between terraces, the surrounding wall, and the gateways have all been documented and reconstructed.

The Foundation's goal of making this a useful, functioning garden that can be maintained and appreciated in the present has required certain compromises. A lighting system has been installed, and an underground irrigation system with slightly visible heads is in place. Now comes the next step, the planting.

Working with Edward D. Stone, Jr. Associates in Wilmington, we have developed a garden plan that reflects what we know about the garden. A committee is formed and Wildwood Nursery is selected to procure the plants. Economic constraints make a phased planting necessary, and force us to compromise in the types and numbers of plants as well. The first phase of planting should be finished by mid-April, 1990.

To celebrate the conclusion of this phase of the work, the Historic Wilmington Foundation has invited Mr. Rudy Favretti, the noted specialist in historic landscapes, to speak about garden restoration in Wilmington. This lecture is planned as the first of a series of educational programs dealing with historic gardens. We see the DeRosset garden, planted in a style appropriate to its time and its owners, as a demonstration for education of the public. Plans include the installation of a production garden for public use.

Mr. Favretti's lecture will kick off a week of garden-related activities of Historic Wilmington Foundation, including a sale of historic plants and a party in our new garden. The public is invited to all three: the lecture, the plant sale, and the party. For information, write to Historic Wilmington Foundation, DeRosset House, 209 Dock St., Wilmington, N.C. 28401; tel. (919) 762-2511.

THE PLANT REPORTER: WHAT IS THIS FLOWER?

by Flora Ann Bynum, Winston-Salem

1. Twelve o'clocks

In last summer's issue of Magnolia, I submitted an article noting several common names of plants that people had asked about, names they could not identify. One of them was "tall twelve o'clocks with purple flowers," mentioned by the late Dr. Adelaide L. Fries, Moravian Church archivist, in a 1935 paper she wrote about flowers cultivated in early gardens of Salem, North Carolina.

Recently a letter came to the editor of Magnolia from Mrs. Alan Emmet of Westford, Massachusetts, saying that in reading the diary of a Portsmouth, New Hampshire, woman she had also come across a description of a flower called "twelve o'clocks." This woman, Sarah Parker Rice, writing late in life about the flowers of her childhood garden, probably dating 1815 to 1820, said: "Among them a bulb, now rarely seen, called a twelve o'clock. It was a little white flower resembling the chicory in shape, which opened at twelve noon and closed in an hour or so."

I talked with two of the society's members who are plant experts, William Lanier Hunt of Chapel Hill and Dr. Arthur O. Tucker of Delaware State College, Dover. Mr. Hunt searched his old garden books and reported he could find nothing using the name "twelve o'clock," either white or purple. Dr. Tucker called back to say that he had found two possibilities to suggest for a plant that might fit Sarah Parker Rice's description, though his references did not use the name of "twelve o'clock." These possibilities, both anemone species, could be a selection of Anemone blanda, the Greek windflower, or a selection of A. nemerosa 'Bracteata', a loose white double flower with green back petals cultivated since the 16th century. Both open during the day, close early, and don't open if the day is cloudy.

2. Tartarian aster

At the landscape restoration conference in Old Salem in Winston-Salem last October, our society president, Dr. Edgar Givhan, and Dr. Tucker came into my small garden to admire and puzzle over a violet-purple aster growing at least six feet tall against the back hedge. All I knew was that it was there when we bought the house in 1952, and the previous owner had told me it was Michaelmas daisy. (Elizabeth Lawrence told me once that this was a general name used for asters.)

Florence Griffin of Atlanta identified the aster in my garden for us as Tartarian aster (Aster tataricus). She said that she had given me a start of this aster, which I had forgotten, but I notice I do have a clump in another part of the garden. Florence got her start from a woman in North Georgia. She also reported that it is listed in the catalogue of Goodness Grows, a nursery in Crawford, Georgia.

When I asked Dr. Tucker if he knew a date of introduction for this aster, he again searched his old garden books and called to report that although he had many, many old garden books and had searched them all, he could find only one reference to Tartarian aster. Robert Sweet, in

Hortus Britannicus, 1830 edition, says that it was introduced in England in 1818. Dr. Tucker said it was amazing given how long this plant has been around that it was not in the literature. He remarked that when he returned to Dover from Winston-Salem after the conference last fall, he found this aster growing in three old gardens there; he had noticed it before but hadn't known what it was.

Hortus III says it is native to Japan, Korea, Manchuria, North China, Mongolia, and Siberia. Elizabeth Lawrence says in A Southern Garden, "Another tall autumn flower is the Tartarian aster, A. tartaricus, a native of Siberia,...planted at the back of a damp border the slender seven foot stalks bend over the spent perennials covering...with great panicles of pale mauve daisies from the middle of September to late October." Note that Miss Lawrence and some authors spell the botanical name A. tartaricus, while Hortus III and most authors use A. tataricus. Pamela Harper, in the book Perennials: How to Select, Grow and Enjoy (1985), which she wrote with Frederick McGourty, mentions Tartarian aster as "one of the durable, shareable plants seldom bought but handed from neighbor to neighbor."

(As I explained to Dr. Tucker, I am a total amateur in botanical fields and have to call on experts--my skill is to be a good, accurate reporter. In each issue of Magnolia we can perhaps carry a report on a little-known or unknown cultivated flower, calling on the experts for aid and pooling our research.)

LANDSCAPE PRESERVATION AWARD

M. C. "Mac" Newsom, a member of Southern Garden History Society, has been named as the second recipient of the Minnette C. Duffy Landscape Preservation Award, given by the Historic Preservation Foundation of North Carolina to recognize his work in preserving and restoring historic gardens and his informative articles on historic landscapes. The award includes a \$500 stipend.

A self-employed landscape architect, Mr. Newsom specializes in historic landscape restoration and residential design. His projects include Haywood Hall in Raleigh and a master plan for a historic district in Murfreesboro. He also writes a regular garden column.

The award was established in 1987 by the family of Minnette Duffy of New Bern, in her memory. Its first recipient was Flora Ann Bynum, Secretary-Treasurer of SGHS.

IN PRINT

Caring for Your Local Cemetery, ninth issue in the "Illinois Preservation Series," should be of use outside its state and region. It provides an overview of cemetery preservation issues and some practical how-to advice. The booklet is available for \$1 from Historic Illinois, Illinois Historic Preservation Agency, Old State Capitol, Springfield, IL 62701. A more state-specific publication, Stones and Statutes, discussing Illinois laws relating to cemeteries and burial places, is available cost-free.

ANNUAL BILLS NOTICES

Notices for annual membership dues in the society were mailed from the headquarters office the end of January. All members whose dues are payable now should have received a notice. These bills are for the current year, 1990. Members who joined after the first of last year will not receive a bill, as according to the society by-laws, anyone joining after January 1 is paid up for the coming year.

On the registration form for the Mount Vernon annual meeting is a space provided for dues for a non-member. This space is only for the use of a non-member who wants to join the society in order to attend the annual meeting. If you already belong, you do not pay your dues with the annual meeting registration but mail your dues to the society headquarters now.

SPRING ISSUE: Please send your articles on any aspect of Southern garden or landscape history, or your news of events, meetings, and publications, by April 20, 1990 to Peggy Newcomb, Associate Editor, at the Thomas Jefferson Memorial Foundation, Inc., Box 316, Charlottesville, VA 22901.

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