



Magnolia

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

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A Nurseryman Evaluates Southern Gardens of the 1850s

by *George R. Stritikus*, Extension Horticulturist, Auburn University and
Melanie Johns, Plant Taxonomist, the Birmingham Botanical Gardens

Up to this point, we have had to rely on a few specific gardening journals and introduction dates to guide us in selecting appropriate plants when reconstructing a period garden. This proves doubly difficult in gardens between the Civil War and WWI. From looking at old nursery catalogs, they appear to have had all the things we have. We have not really been able to describe with any degree of certainty what a "typical" garden of the period contained.

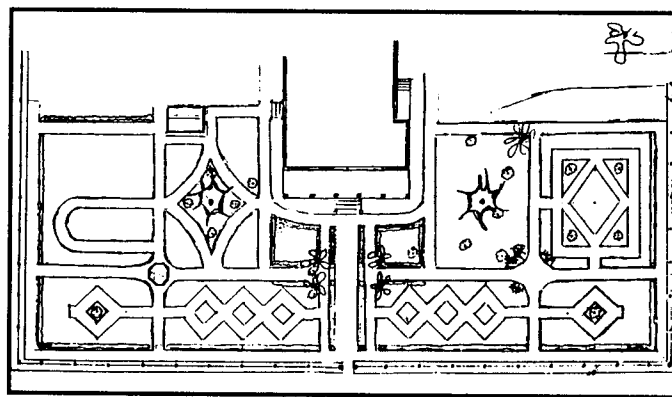
While researching an antebellum monthly agricultural magazine that was published in Montgomery, I came across a letter to the editor of a Natchez newspaper. It proved to be exactly the kind of source document we need to evaluate what plant materials were common, or popular.

The writer was Thomas Affleck. Harvey Cotton, now Director of the Huntsville Botanical Garden, had delivered an address on this very man at the second annual meeting of the Southern Garden History Society in Natchez, Mississippi, in

1984. He was a noteworthy Scottish nurseryman who had a nursery in a small town 6 miles from Natchez, Mississippi, named Washington. He later moved his business to Texas and was noteworthy there as well.

It is found in the "American Cotton Planter," Volume 3, 1855, pages 381- 4;

although it was originally for the Natchez Daily Courier and is dated October 24, 1854. The occasion for the correspondence appears to be renewed interest in city beautification and the poor decisions made in the past by the city council. The following is a transcription.



The Battle-Friedman Garden as designed and installed by Lord Ashberton's Gardener in spring of 1843, in Tuscaloosa, Alabama.

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[From the *Natchez* (Miss.) *Daily Courier*, Oct. 23, 1854]
Washington, Adams County, Miss., October 24, 1854.

Editor Natchez Courier

Dear Sir: -

In common with your many readers, I have had much pleasure in perusing the very interesting and valuable articles on "Fruit-growing in the South" by Rusticus. The information they contain was just of the kind we most needed.

As your "City of the Bluffs" seems to have become greatly alive to improvement, of late years, and many neat and home-like houses have been erected in and around the city, a few hints on planting ornamental trees and shrubs, with short descriptions of some of the less common and rarer sorts, may be apropos and useful.

We lack *variety*, as a general thing, in this class of trees and plants. In a climate in which a greater number of rare and extremely beautiful evergreens are perfectly hardy, than in any other I know of, unless perhaps the Isle of Wight, off the south coast of England - and doubtful if even there - we confine ourselves to some half-dozen kinds. Nothing can be more beautiful than the Laurier Amandier, (*Cerarsus Caroliniensis*) (sic), Cape Jessamine, Arbor Vitae, some of the Viburnums, Pittosporums, Euonymus, and

Myrtles; yet, there is a sameness in our lawns and door-yards, from the general and almost exclusive use of these, that might readily be relieved by the addition of some of the many others which are equally, and in some instances, more beautiful.

So with our shade trees. The perpetually recurring Pride of China tree, beautiful though it be, to the exclusion of the scores of magnificent trees, native and introduced, is, to say the least of it, in very bad taste. It is a filthy tree, too, about the yard, when compared with many others.

As a shade and ornamental tree, there is none will compare with our magnificent Water oak, and Live oak. The latter is more beautiful and permanent; the former is of somewhat more rapid growth.

Suppose that, instead of the China tree, your streets and pleasant Bluff promenade, had been lined and shaded with these oaks! By this time, you would have had ornamental trees such as few cities can boast of. The Mobilians were alive to the beauty of the Live oak as a shade tree for their streets and squares, and see the result now!

The Cork oak, (*Quercus suber*), the Holly-leaved¹ and the Cut-leaved Turkey oak² are all very beautiful, though yet somewhat rare. I have fine young trees of all of them.

The Imperial Paulownia, with its immense leaves and numberless spikes of blue bell-like blossoms, has been introduced some ten or a dozen years, and is quite an acquisition. It blooms here, abundantly, both

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Calendar

February 21st-23rd, 1997. "Tools of the Trade," Southeast Regional Meeting of the Association for Living Historical Farms & Agricultural Museums. Held at Colonial Williamsburg. Contact John A. Caramia, Jr., Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, P. O. Box 1776, Williamsburg, VA 23187-1776. (804) 220-2473; Fax: (804) 220-7357.

March 21st-23rd, 1997. Fifteenth-annual meeting of the Southern Garden History Society, in Tallahassee, Florida (see article in this issue). For more information, contact Weej Broderson, 2469 B. Grassroots Way, Tallahassee, FL 32311. (904) 656-1163.

May 24th, 1997. Fifth-annual Open House of the Thomas Jefferson Center for Historic Plants at Monticello. Morning lectures will be followed by a visit to the center's private nursery at Tufton Farm where the collections of heirloom roses and dianthus will be in full bloom. Rosarian Douglas Seidel will conduct a workshop on rose propagation and identification. For more information, contact Peggy Newcomb, P. O. Box 316, Charlottesville, VA 22902, (804) 984-9816.

October 2nd-4th, 1997. Eleventh "Restoring Southern Gardens and Landscapes" conference at Old Salem (see article *this issue*). For more information contact the Landscape Conference, Old Salem Inc., P. O. Box F, Salem Station, Winston-Salem, NC 27108.

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spring and fall.

The Varnish tree (*Sterichua platynifolia*)³ (sic) is so called from its beautiful glossy bark, and large rich colored leaves, which seem all to have been recently coated with green varnish. It is, altogether, a pretty and desirable ornamental shade tree.

The Croton tree⁴, and Everblooming China⁵ are both pretty trees, though, in a severe winter, the ends of the branches are sometimes killed by the frost.

The *Acacia julibrissin*⁶, or flowering Acacia, though by no means rare, is yet too-showy, with its myriads of pink and yellow flowers, to be omitted in pleasure grounds, or even small yards.

Several of the Maples are native here, and form, as elsewhere, most beautiful trees. Perhaps the best of these is the Scarlet Maple, so showy in the spring with its bright scarlet blossoms. The ash-leaved Maple (*Negundo*) or Box Elder, cannot be excelled as a shade tree in any country, where it has room to grow and spread. Several of the European Maples do well here, and desirable trees.

The Chestnut is one of the many stately trees of the forest, and desirable not only as a lawn tree, but for its fruit. The large fruited Spanish is the finest⁷.

Our Great Southern Cypress (*Taxodium*) should never be omitted, where the soil is rich and moist. The chief cause of its rarity in lawns, etc., is the difficulty of transplanting young trees from the swamp, to the dry upland of our hills. With trees grown on dry land from seed, there is no such difficulty.

The graceful weeping willow, though so easily grow, is comparatively rare. The *curled-leaved* variety⁸ being quite as *weeping* in its habits as the other, is very curious. Each leaf is curled up like a cork-screw.

The Ginkgo (*Salisbaria*)⁹ or Maiden-hair tree is pretty, and quite ornamental. The leaves are very curious.

The double-flowering Peach is one of the most showy of trees, forming early in the spring, a mass of wreaths of rich and extremely double, rose-like blossoms.

Where there is room for a few large and wide-spreading trees, the Peccan (sic) should not be

overlooked. They afford a fine shade, and come into bearing in eight or ten years.

We know of one gentleman in western Texas, who has some 15 or 20 varieties of this delicious nut, which he has succeeded in multiplying by grafting. Two years ago, he sent the writer a quantity of nuts from each of 8 or 10 of the finest of his selections. These were planted and have produced a fine lot of trees; the trees from each variety of nut show a wonderful family likeness, in foliage, habit of growth, & c; whilst there is a marked difference between the lots. They have been all twice transplanted, and root-pruned each time; thus in a great measure obviating the difficulty in transplanting when the trees are older.

The Mountain Ash, or *Rowan Tree*, dear to every Scotchman's boyish recollections, we have succeeded in acclimating. It is a beautiful tree.

The large-leaved Magnolia (*M. macrophylla*) from that same difficulty of transplanting from the woods, is quite rare in our gardens; where its magnificent foliage and immensely large and showy flowers fully entitle it to a first place. When grown from seed in the nursery-row, there is no difficulty in removing it.

Of evergreen shade trees, the *Magnolia grandiflora* stands first. Like its companion the *Holly*, it is not easily removed from the woods. When quite young this may be effected, by lifting with a ball of earth around the roots, in the spring, and cutting off the leaves, but leaving the leaf-stalks. They well deserve that every available means should be used to secure both – the Magnolia and the Holly (*Ilex opaca*) – whenever shade and ornament are

sought for. During the first three or four years from seed, their growth is quite slow; but afterwards they push up rapidly, and soon form handsome trees.

There is another Holly, a native to the South, and an evergreen, that is very generally overlooked. It is more commonly planted about Mobile than anywhere else. This is *Ilex Vomitaria* (sic). The growth is slender, leaves small and numerous, and in winter the plant is covered with bright scarlet berries.

Of the various *Coniferae*, it is rare to find a plant in a lawn in all this region; unless perhaps, an occasional Long-leaved or Old-field Pine¹⁰ – both most noble and beautiful trees, and not planted one for a thousand that should be. There are many other Pines, from all parts of the world, now to be found in nurseries, and all



Harper's Weekly, 1887, illustration showing the street trees planted down Dexta Avenue.

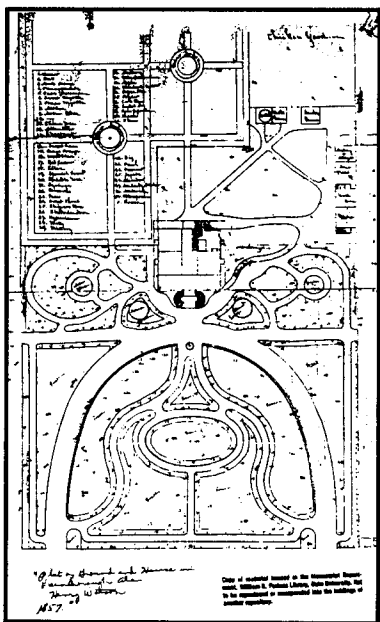
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desirable.

The Spruces are the most prized of this family in Europe, although so common, that they are planted by the thousand to serve as screens to lawns and gardens, and to plantations of other less hardy trees. The Norway Spruce, (*Abies excelsa*,) (sic)¹¹ the most common, is also the most beautiful. In fact, I know of no tree that equals it in gorgeous and impressive beauty. Some ten years ago, I imported a lot of fine plants of this and other Spruces; and, as in every other attempt to import young evergreens either from the North or Europe, I saved but a very small percentage. Of those saved were two Norway Spruces. For five years they did not make a growth of more than an inch a year! After that they shot up rapidly, and are now beautiful, healthy plants, eight or ten feet in height. Since then I have been more successful in habituating young plants to the climate, and have fine young trees



The only extant landscape design for Henry Watson, 1857, in Greensboro, Alabama.

of several species of Spruce.

The Cedars are very beautiful. And, by the way, what we know as the Red Cedar, is a Juniper, bearing a small purple berry; the Cedars are cone-

bearing. *Cedrus deodara*, the Great Indian Cedar is the most splendid tree of this family; perfectly hardy here, and of very rapid growth; rare, however. The Cedars of Lebanon is also hardy, but of much slower growth.

Two new evergreen Conifers, *Cryptomeria japonica* and *Cunninghamii* (sic) *Sinensis* - the former from Japan, the latter from China - I look upon as great acquisitions. Both are at home in our climate; requiring, however, like all of these resinous evergreens, a light sandy, but rich soil; and are most graceful and beautiful, yet curious ornaments to the lawn or door-yard.

Another of these, the great Chili Pine, (*Arancaria imbricata*), has not succeeded so well; though I have now a few young seedlings that seem to feel themselves at home.

The Junipers, headed by our own native, the so-called Red Cedar, (*J. virginiana*) are indispensable. In the "Red Cedar" there is a great diversity of foliage and habit of growth; some being open and loose in habit, others upright and compact. The latter I have always selected from the seed-bed. They should have room to grow, and be allowed to sweep the ground with their branches; not pruned up into the likeness of a gigantic broom!

The Swedish Juniper¹² is very upright in growth and with fine and delicate, silvery foliage, and altogether a pretty plant.

The Arbo Vita is well known - that is, the Chinese, (*orientalis*), the sort common here. And to form a pretty screen hedge, I know of nothing more beautiful; requiring to be kept nicely clipped, and the seed cones picked off so soon as large enough - otherwise the foliage becomes brown.

The American Arbor Vitae, (*Thuja occidentalis*,) is still a more desirable plant; bearing the shears equally well, retaining its color better, and the foliage giving out a sweet odor when crushed. The *Thuja plicata* is a wavy-foliaged, pendulous kind, also pretty.

It was long before I succeeded with the Yews. The English Yew is now perfectly healthy and grows vigorously. Its close, dark green foliage renders it very desirable, and especially in the cemetery, where from time immemorial, it has been considered the most fitting ornament.

And so with the Tree Boxes - the neatest and prettiest of evergreen trees; always fresh and pleasant to look on. They grow better here than even their native climate; as does, also, the Dwarf Box, for edgings.

The *Euonymus*, evergreen and variegated, are both very ornamental. The evergreen is often misnamed Tree Box. They are very hardy and grow rapidly.

There are several of the *Viburnum* which are handsome evergreens. *V. Lucidum* (sic)¹³ has rich dark foliage and showy white flowers, and makes a large plant. *V. laurus-tinus* (sic)¹⁴, or Laurustinus is one of the very richest of our flowering evergreens; blooming, too, so very early in the spring, or in the winter rather, as to be very desirable.

The Laurels are all beautiful. But, like many of our finest plants - because not named in Northern books on gardening; and because Downing expresses his regret, at the same time that he gives expression to his admiration of the plants, that they are "too aristocratic in their nature to thrive on our Republican!"¹⁵ - the whole tribe has been overlooked. The *Laurus nobilis*, the Portugal, the English, and the Carolinian laurels¹⁶, are perfectly hardy - the three first after *habitation* to the climate - and are rich and very beautiful evergreens. I have splendid plants of all, and especially of the English - (*Cerasus lauro-cerasus*.)

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Legendary Southern Horticulturist William Lanier Hunt Dies

by Flora Ann Bynum, Winston-Salem,
North Carolina

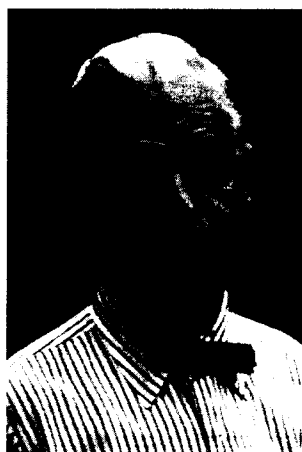


photo by C.A. Brown

William Lanier Hunt of Chapel Hill, North Carolina, honorary president of the Southern Garden History Society, died October 19th after a brief illness with cancer. He was ninety years old.

Thanks to his extraordinary vision, the *Southern Garden History Society* owes its very existence to Bill Hunt. In 1979 at Old Salem's first "Restoring Southern

Gardens and Landscapes" conference (in Winston-Salem), he made an eloquent speech proclaiming the need to establish a garden history society in the south. He further urged that such an organization, modeled after the Garden History Society of England, needed to begin preserving old southern gardens and plants immediately. At the second conference in 1980, Mr. Hunt repeated the plea.

He made such a society sound so appealing that Old Salem's business office began receiving inquiries from people who wanted to join.

John B. Flowers III, representing the Stagville Center of the North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources in Durham, and Flora Ann Bynum, representing Old Salem Inc., met with Bill Hunt three times to draw up bylaws and incorporation papers. In March 1982, with Bill signing the Articles of Incorporation as "initial registered agent," the society was born officially.

The society's first board met in May of that year and named Bill Hunt honorary president. He served also as host to the society's fall board meeting at his home in Chapel Hill in October 1984. SGHS's first issue of *Magnolia Essays*, published in 1993, was dedicated to Bill Hunt for "his lifelong contributions to the appreciation of southern gardening and southern garden history."



The North Carolina Botanical Garden gave a dinner honoring Bill Hunt the evening of October 18th, on the occasion of the thirtieth-anniversary meeting of the Botanical Garden Foundation, Inc. He also became the third recipient of the Flora Caroliniana Award, joining

the ranks of Lady Bird Johnson and naturalist John Terres. A booklet prepared for the meeting by Ken Moore, assistant director of the Botanical Garden, called Mr. Hunt the "Dean of Southern Horticulture." The booklet's introduction states: "In celebrating William Lanier Hunt's life . . . we are celebrating his many, many contributions to the world of horticulture, his founding of the Botanical Garden Foundation, and his lifelong efforts to keep us all mindful of the heritage, not only of our natural world, but of the cultural life of our state and community during the twentieth century."

Bill Hunt was born in 1906 in Pomona, North Carolina, on the outskirts of Greensboro and near his uncle's 400-acre Lindley Nurseries, one of the south's oldest and largest. There he played in the greenhouses and learned from the nursery staff, which included gardeners from Europe. He graduated from Woodberry Forest School in Virginia, and from the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill in 1931, where he studied botany under the late Dr. W. C. Coker. He continued to live the rest of his life in Chapel Hill. A profile of Bill Hunt printed in *The Chapel Hill News* (October 18, 1996) described his career that continually sought for information about southern horticulture, noting: "In the decade after his 1931... graduation ... he referred to himself as 'a wandering garden specialist,' roaming from town to town consulting on park and beautification projects, lecturing and teaching garden short courses. Nurseries, private gardens and even cemeteries became his outdoor classrooms, and the first-hand knowledge he amassed was stored away for future use."

During his college years he explored the rhododendron-covered bluffs called Laurel Hill along Morgan Creek east of Chapel Hill, and gradually began buying land. He was determined to preserve this magnificent natural landscape, and eventually gave the one-hundred-twenty-five acres, known as *The William Lanier Hunt Arboretum*, to the North Carolina Botanical Garden.

"Bill Hunt has been my link to Southern Garden heritage," noted Linda Askey, SGHS member and garden editor for *Southern Living* magazine. "He and his contemporaries, Elizabeth Lawrence and Caroline Dorman, gardened voraciously and wrote eloquently, setting a pace that challenges the most experienced gardeners with their diverse palette of plants while offering the simple understandings that beginners need." In 1967, at his urging, the University of North Carolina Press reprinted Elizabeth Lawrence's 1942 classic, *A Southern Garden*, for which Bill wrote the

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William Lanier Hunt

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forward. In 1995 Bill Hunt was named an honorary member of the Garden Writers Association of America at its meeting in Texas. He was an active promoter of the garden club movement begun in the 1920s and he lectured to club members in fifteen states while still a very young man.

He served overseas during World War II where his ability to speak and read French and German enabled him to work with the Belgian underground and the strategical bombing survey. He was one of the first American Fellows of the Royal Horticultural Society (F.R.H.S.) and had many contacts in England through visits there.

In the 1960s he worked with University of North Carolina trustees and others to develop the North Carolina Botanical Garden, which opened in 1966. He organized and served as first president of the Botanical Garden Foundation, Inc. Bill Hunt was instrumental also in establishing the renown Landscape Gardening School at Sandhills Community College in Southern Pines, North Carolina.

In 1982, Duke University Press published Mr. Hunt's *Southern Gardens*, *Southern Gardening*. The

book's jacket states: "William Lanier Hunt is the leading authority writing today on southern gardens. His historical knowledge, deep appreciation of gardening in all its aspects, and firsthand experience of all the South, makes this collection of his best writings a valuable and practical source for every southern gardener. Hunt encourages his readers to move beyond the stereotyped gardens of dime store seed flats and instructs gardeners in the finer points of growing and finding native plants, flowers and



photo by C.A. Brown

... "Dean of Southern Horticulture."

trees. He recalls what our grandmothers and great-grandmothers grew, and exhorts his readers to look up from the spade to become aware of the overall design of their gardens, of color schemes, and of how to plan beyond azaleas and daylilies."

Linda Askey aptly describes him as the essential grand gentleman of the garden who still managed to retain "the spark of enthusiasm that keeps him ever young and ever dear to countless gardeners he has influenced." ♦

Tallahassee to Host 1997 Annual Meeting

by Gina M. Edwards, Tallahassee, Florida

When Florida became a United States Territory and opened for settlement in 1821, among the many prominent families who migrated South were brothers Hardy and Bryan Croom, sons of William Croom of New Bern, North Carolina. Their love of family, horticulture and the north Florida countryside created a vision that would eventually become Goodwood Plantation near Tallahassee — site of the upcoming SGHS annual meeting on March 21-23, 1997. Heeding the distinct contrast to the tropical southern region of the state, the dramatic character of Florida's north and central areas is the focus of the conference's theme:

"The Other Florida."

Unlike the sandy soil and small-leaf evergreens of the southern region, north Florida is characterized by

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deciduous trees and fertile, red clay. Freshwater lakes and meandering rivers run throughout both the north and central parts of the state. Early nineteenth-century plantations that escaped Civil War destruction are scattered throughout these areas. Many began as prosperous, crop-producing farms that, later, transformed into hunting plantations, country estates, and luxury homes. So, too, there are houses and gardens built by wealthy Northerners who used Florida as their playground during the boom times of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Included among these antebellum and post-Civil War properties are Box Hall, Horseshoe Plantation, and Maclay Gardens.

Tours of Tallahassee area plantations and estates will include the conference host site, Goodwood Plantation, where director of horticulture Nancy White and curator Larry Paarlberg will give attendees a historical overview. White and Paarlberg have studied hundred of photographs and documents to piece together the lives of Goodwood's alluring and multifarious occupants, as well as the plantation's horticultural history. The main house, peripheral buildings, and grounds are still undergoing extensive restoration, so conference participants will get an uncommon private view into the process of recreating the spirit and essence of a historic Southern home and garden.

Goodwood's builder was Bryan Croom, but it was his brother Hardy who first conceived the idea for the house. The brothers owned extensive acreage throughout what is now the Florida Panhandle, in Gadsden, Jackson, and Leon counties, including a large part of what was originally the Lafayette Land Grant. In addition

to property ownership, the territory supplied Hardy with a vast and untouched wilderness for his botanical interests. A lawyer by training, but a planter by vocation, Hardy Croom wrote in many scientific journals about plants and planting in the South. Along with a number of Florida plants, Hardy is credited with the discovery of the *Torreya* tree, named in honor of his friend, Dr. John Torrey, one of the best known American botanists of the nineteenth century.

Hardy grew to love the area and he longed to move his family there. Although he resolved to build the house,

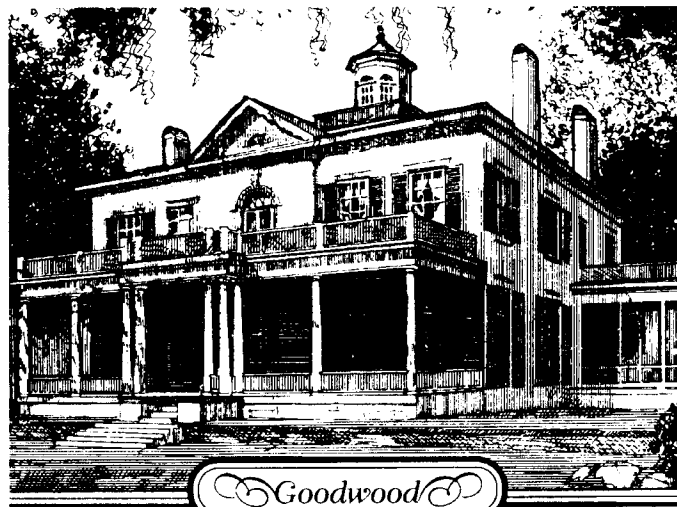


his wife Frances resisted for several years. Once she finally agreed and the family headed South toward their new life in Florida, Goodwood's future was forced into ambiguity. Hardy, his wife, and three children drowned on October 9, 1837 when a hurricane off the coast of North Carolina, called Racer's Storm, sank their steamship, ironically named "Home."

Eventually Bryan took control of the property and in the 1840s he built the house of which his brother Hardy dreamed. Bryan turned the land into a prosperous farming plantation, but the story of Goodwood might be quite different had Hardy lived. Goodwood's tumultuous history began when Bryan was sued by the family of Frances Smith Croom, Hardy's wife, for a part of the estate. After a precedent-setting, twenty-year lawsuit, Frances' mother, Henrietta Smith won ownership of Goodwood, only to sell it a few short weeks later.



Harman
Blennerhassett.
Photo by
S. Nicely.



Goodwood

Over the next century, Goodwood passed through opulent times of elaborate entertaining and through uncertain times verging on penury. Its owners ranged from the elusive Dr. and Mrs. William Lamb Arrowsmith to the highly social and wealthy Mrs. Fanny Tiers, to the world-traveling Senator W. C. Hodges.

Goodwood's last owner, Mr. Tom Hood, left the estate in the hands of the Margaret E. Wilson Foundation upon his death in 1990. Named for his late wife, this foundation allowed for the beginning of the property's restoration so

that it can be opened to the public as a museum and cultural park.

The 1997 conference promises to be a gateway to the historic landscape of north and central Florida. Like the gates of Goodwood itself, which open amidst dignified live oaks, sago palms, and Spanish moss, SGHS members will be welcomed to an enrapturing promenade to the past.

All members will receive full details on the 1997 meeting within the next two months. Please join us. ♦

Southern Gardens of the 1850s... continued from page 4



The *Photynias* (sic), or Japan Hawthorns, are like Laurels, as yet somewhat rare in our gardens and lawns. There is a superb plant of the smooth-leaved *Photynia* (*P. glauca*)¹⁷ in Mr. Profilet's garden behind the Episcopal church in the city of Natchez, which has been for many years an object of admiration, and especially when covered with its myriads of snow-white blossoms. It is, I should judge, some twenty-five feet tall, affording a fine shade. The Holly-leaved, (*P. serrulata*) is yet more beautiful. I do not know of a richer evergreen. The small-leaved is also very pretty.

The *Pittosporums*, both evergreen and variegated, are well known and favorite plants. They bear the shears well.

Olea fragrans, the Fragrant Olive, is an (sic) universal favorite with the ladies, and most deservedly so.

There are several of the Privets which form beautiful ornamental evergreen trees. The handsome

evergreen, so generally admired, on the top of the mound, between the house of our friend Mr. Andrew Brown and the river, is the *Chinese Privet*¹⁸. It is at all times a beautiful plant, but especially when covered with its racemes of white flowers. The Evergreen, the Myrtle-leaved, and the Box-leaved¹⁹, though commonly used for hedging, may be readily trained into very pretty smallish trees.

The Japan Plum - *Eriobotrya* (*Meapilus*) *Japonica* (sic)²⁰ - whether as a mere ornamental evergreen, for which it is second to few others, or for the fragrance of its flowers, or delicious fruit, is deserving of infinitely more attention than it has received. It has hitherto been somewhat scarce, and what few there were budded on quince. I have now large, healthy and handsome trees, *seedlings grown here*, many of which are now full of blossoms. The Japan Plum has ripened its fruit repeatedly in this country; and a very delicious fruit it is. It is now abundant in the markets of New Orleans in April.

The *Gardenias* - Cape Jessamine is the most common - are of course indispensable. The dwarf kind (*G. radicans*) is a lovely little plant. Fortune's new Chinese (*G. Fortunei*) was lauded so highly that I feared a disappointment. But it proved to be all he represented —the foliage larger and richer, and the blossoms fully double the size and more perfect in form; and though fragrant, not so oppressively so as the old sort.

But I have already extended my notes to such a length, that I must now be brief.

I find I have omitted a very beautiful ornamental plant, which forms a small tree - a great favorite of the ladies - the Venetian Sumac, Fringe or Mat tree²¹; the blossoms appearing in numerous and delicately colored, haze-like spikes. It is not evergreen, but a lovely plant in a group of evergreens.

The *Deutzias*, *Crape Myrtles*, double-flowering *Pomegranates*, *Forsythias*, *Honeysuckles*, *Lilacs*, *Snowballs*, *Syringas*, (or *Mock Orange*)²², *Ivy*²³, *Brooms*, with a host of other beautiful plants, I must leave for another opportunity to describe.

As to transplanting shade trees, ornamental plants, and especially evergreens - bear in mind, that a thing that is worth doing at all, is worth doing well, and act up to it. Let the ground be properly prepared. If the entire lawn was well manured and thoroughly trench-plowed, and garden or door-yards well and deeply dug, so much the better. When this cannot be done. Let large be dug, but not too deep if in a stiff retentive clay. For evergreen, provide a supply of rich, black, leaf-soil from the woods, and of well-rotted manure; for deciduous trees, any good and not too rank manure will do.

If your shade trees are to be procured from fields or woods, select those only which grow *in the open* - not from dense woods or thickets. Spare no pains in

Old Salem Hosts Landscape Restoration Conference in October 1997

by Darrell Spencer, Winston-Salem, North Carolina

The field of historic landscape restoration remains as diverse today as historical properties themselves. As we attempt to remove or reveal successive layers of change in the historic landscape we are faced with a perplexing array of issues such as historical significance, current site use and public access, interpretive intent, budgets and maintenance. "Expanding and Redefining the Vision," the topic of the eleventh Restoring Southern Gardens and Landscapes conference (see calendar) will address these complex and often confusing concerns. The conference speakers, including SGHS members Kent Brinkley, Rudy Favretti, Catherine Howett,

Allan Brown, Valencia Libby and others, will draw from their wide-ranging experiences with historic landscapes of the South to explore the meaning of landscape "restoration" from a variety of perspectives. The conference will examine proven strategies for implementing such restorations. ♦

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Southern Gardens of the 1850s... continued from page 8



the taking up all of the roots that can be saved, and especially the small fibrous ones; covering them with wet moss or gunny bags, or old carpets, etc., to keep them from being dried by the air or sun. When the tree is a handsome or valuable one, it should be lifted with a sufficient mass of earth to insure its safety. Trees or shrubs which have been prepared the year before for removal, as is done in all the good nurseries, can be transplanted with infinitely less risk than those from the fields or woods. I have large specimens of English Laurel, Euonymus, Cedars, Junipers, Spruces, Japan Plums, Hollies (sic), Magnolias, etc., which have been repeatedly root-pruned, so that a very moderate sized ball of earth would contain all of the roots necessary to the well-being of the plant.

Transplanting should be done, now, as early as possible. November, February, and March, I deem the best seasons here. Plant no deeper than the tree grew

naturally. Mix the manure with the best of the soil that came out of the hole; when the manure is rank and coarse, best put in the larger portion near the surface. Finish with a few buckets of water, and stake the tree or plant firmly, that it may not be shaken with the wind.

In removing large trees, thin out the top somewhat, and shorten the branches; but never trim the tree to a bare pole, or anything approaching to it. For although in some instances trees thus treated may live, they will be exceptions to the rule. In transplanting Live oaks, I prefer clipping off a portion of the leaves, first shortening the branches. I have a very handsome lot of these, now five to six feet high, which have been twice transplanted and root-pruned, so that they may now be removed with entire safety.

In conclusion, let me advise those who have places to improve, to secure good sized plants, if such can be had that can safely transplanted. A pleasing effect is thus produced, and at once, which would otherwise require long years of waiting for. ✦

Footnotes:

¹ Hortus III recognizes the Holly oak as *Quercus illex*, a native of the Mediterranean region. The exact identity of this plant is not certain. There are several oaks that have a holly-leaved form...

² The Turkey oak is now known as *Quercus laevis*. Hortus III recognizes no forms of Turkey oak, as the cut-leaved one he refers to.

³ *Sterculia platanifolia* was reassigned and is now *Firmiana simplex*.

⁴ The identity of this plant is not certain. *Exotica* has a listing for a tree croton, *Codiaeum poitanti*, but this is no guarantee they are the same plant.

⁵ The identity of this plant is not certain.

⁶ *Acacia julibrissin* was reassigned and is not *Albizia julibrissin*.

⁷ The Spanish chestnut is another name for the European chestnut, *Castanea pulchella*.

⁸ *Salix babylonica* 'Crispa' or sometimes called 'Annularis', introduced 1730 (Dirr). The more commonly seen *Salix matsudana* 'Tortuosa' was not introduced until 1923 (Dirr).

⁹ *Salisburia adiantifolia* has been reassigned and is now *Ginkgo biloba*.

¹⁰ This sentence can be read as one plant with two different common names, or two separate plants. Longleaf pine is *Pinus palustris*. The identity of the second one is uncertain. L.H. Bailey identifies the Old Field Pine as *Pinus taeda*, the Loblolly pine.

¹¹ The Norway spruce is not *Aibes*, but *Picea abies*. This group was pulled out of the *Aibes* group, which are the Firs, and put in a genus all their own.

¹² This plant, *Juniperus suecica*, is now thought to be a form of Common juniper, *J. communis* var. *fastigiata*.

¹³ Today, *V. lucidum*, meaning "the shiny viburnum," is no longer recognized. It was the old name for a *Viburnum tinus* cultivar, according to Hortus III. It should be written *V. tinus* var. 'Lucidum'.

¹⁴ This plant name should be written *Viburnum tinus*, according to Hortus III.

¹⁵ This quote by the famous landscape architect practicing at the time up North- and widely read in the South- appears not to be complete as written. Apparently the last word was left out during typesetting. It should probably read "on our Republican soil."

¹⁶ The exact identity of these three forms of Laurel is not certain. Hortus III recognizes three forms: one with very narrow, willow-like leaves, one with golden leaves, and one with leaves that have a wavy margin.

¹⁷ Now *Photinia glabra*, Japanese photinia.

¹⁸ This plant appears to be what is now *Ligustrum lucidum*, the Waxleaf ligustrum, which is evergreen in Alabama. Further north the extreme cold will cause it to lose all its leaves. Hortus III says that the real Chinese Privet, *L. sinense* is deciduous.

¹⁹ The identity of these three forms is uncertain.

²⁰ *Eriobotrya japonica*, the Loquat.

²¹ The exact identity is not known. Because he calls it a Fringe tree, it can be *Chionanthus virginicus*, Grancy greybeard, but you could not describe the flowers as hazy spikes. This description could apply to the lilac-chaste tree, *Vitex agnus-castus*.

²² *Philadelphus*. The native is *P. inodorus* and has no fragrance. *P. coronarius*, which looks very much like the native, is strongly scented.

²³ Probably the Scotch broom, *Cytisus scoparius*.

Of Note

Historic Landscapes Institute: Preserving Jefferson's Landscape and Gardens

For two weeks in June, the gardens and grounds of Monticello and the University of Virginia will serve as the setting for a unique educational experience in the theory and practice of historic landscape preservation. This newly created summer institute is designed as an introduction to landscape history, garden restoration, and historical horticulture by using the landscapes of Monticello and the University as case studies and outdoor classrooms. Monticello staff and UVa faculty will provide instruction through lectures, walking tours, field trips, and field work. The 1997 Institute will be held from June 15th-27th. For more information, contact Charlottesville Regional Programs, UVa, (804) 982-5313 or fax (804) 982-5324. ✦

Recent Discovery Sheds Light on the Gardens of Blennerhassett Island

by Linda Watkins, Parkersburg, West Virginia



"... shrubbery, laid out in such a manner as to represent the thirteen states of the Confederacy!"

When you are working with a home that burned to the ground in 1811, you cannot help but be a little envious of the gardening records that exist from other notable historic estates. At the Blennerhassett Island Historical State Park near Parkersburg, West Virginia, we look longingly at the copious plant lists and landscaping plans of Virginia's Thomas Jefferson (Monticello) and Lady Jean Skipwith (Prestwoud). All we can do is to read in diaries or a very few books or travelers' accounts of the glories that once existed in the Blennerhassett gardens. From these accounts and some archaeological work done in the 1970s and 1980s, we can draw some rather nebulous conclusions, and these were shaken considerably by the recent discovery of an 1843 newspaper article. But first, some background information is in order.

Harman Blennerhassett was a wealthy Irishman who settled with his wife Margaret on a wilderness island on the Ohio River. There, in 1798, he built a magnificent mansion and estate. At a time when many of their neighbors lived in log structures, the Blennerhassett Mansion, with its elegant furniture, gilded cornices, and Oriental carpets, was truly a showplace. For a few brief years, it was the glittering center of social activity in the valley.

Unfortunately, in 1806, Harman Blennerhassett became entangled in a mysterious military enterprise with Aaron Burr. President Jefferson accused both men of plotting treason in attempting to establish an empire in the Southwest. Although Burr was tried and acquitted and Blennerhassett released from prison, the circumstances ruined the lives of both men.

Furthermore, the exquisite mansion accidentally burned to the ground in 1811, leaving no trace of its graceful, semicircular lines. In 1973, archaeologists rediscovered its foundations, and through a continuing program of careful historical and architectural research, the mansion has been recreated and furnished.

The gardens, alas, have not. Descriptions in visitors' diaries and journals unearthed by park historian, Dr. Ray Swick, indicate that they should exist. Documentary evidence tells us that the Blennerhassetts laid out two gardens — one to the north-northwest of the house, which was ornamental, and another, more utilitarian kitchen garden to the south-southwest. The custodian in charge of the gardens was Peter Taylor, an Englishman from Lancashire who "had been bred to the pursuit." He entered the Blennerhassetts' service in 1803.

The kitchen garden encompassed an acre and was surrounded by a paling fence. Although no archaeological work has been done, we know from

written accounts the kitchen garden contained currant bushes, strawberries, musk melons, cantaloupes, and a vinery. Orange, lemon, olive, citron, and fig trees were brought to maturity in hothouses. Beyond the kitchen garden lay the orchards, where a wide variety of fruit trees were grown.

The Blennerhassett flower garden extended over two-and-a-third

acres and was enclosed by a tall paling fence, with surviving post holes that have allowed twentieth-century archaeologists, under the direction of Jeff Graybill, to trace the garden's exact boundaries. The fence was



*View of the restored 1798 Blennerhassett mansion.
Photo courtesy of Blennerhassett Island State Park.*

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Gardens of Blennerhassett Island

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decorated on the interior side with espaliers of peach, apricot, quince, and pear trees, and gooseberry bushes. Toward the center of the garden wound serpentine gravel paths that, bordered by "thick masses" of shrubs, passed under bowers and arbors of honeysuckles and eglantine roses. Some of the shrubs were imported from abroad; others were selected with great care from the adjacent forest.

The paths led to ornamental summerhouses or gazebos where strollers could sit to rest and admire the view. A maze or labyrinth of high hedges added an air of mystery. The garden's trees and

shrubs were mirrored in the waters of a fish pond. All in all, the garden was surely worthy of the accolade given it by English actor John Bernard in 1801 who called it "this Italy of the West," adding that "... until I go to my grave I must bear with me, as of a dream, the remembrance of the beautiful Blennerhassett ... the Paradise."

These accounts had led us to assume that the gardens of the well-read and widely-traveled Blennerhassett reflected the naturalistic gardening styles then popular in Britain. Imagine our surprise upon the discovery of an account in the Zanesville Gazette, published October 18, 1843. The article, by a man who visited the island while the Blennerhassetts were still in residence, described the area in front of the crescent-shaped mansion: "The space in front of the principal building, and between the two wings, was set in flowers. On the north, between the house and river, was the shrubbery, laid out in such a manner as to represent the thirteen states of the Confederacy! gravelled walks, answering to boundary lines! This was the shrubbery which Wirt says 'even Shenstone might have envied'."

This article contains the first mention of a parlor garden that we have seen, changing our concept of an expansive grass lawn in front of the mansion. The late eighteenth-

and early nineteenth-century practice of growing flowers in front of the house might easily have captured the imagination of Margaret Blennerhassett.

The most intriguing aspect of the article, however, is the reference to the area "laid out in such a manner as to represent the thirteen states of the Confederacy!" Could this possibly be referring to the maze of high hedges noted in an earlier visitor account to the island? Certainly it seems to indicate a highly developed imagination on the part of the designer. One wonders, however, what Shenstone, who embraced the naturalistic movement, might have envied in such a garden.

It is obvious that much research needs to be done before the Blennerhassett gardens can be restored. The Blennerhassett Historical Foundation, Inc., recently initiated a program to begin again the archeological work that had been interrupted in the 1980s. An archaeologist has been retained who will work with field school students from West Virginia University to complete a professional dig of the garden area. The Parkersburg community and representatives from WVU are enthusiastic and supportive of this opportunity.

Only when the gardens are complete can the mansion be seen as it was for the few glorious years that the Blennerhassetts resided there. Eventually, the restored gardens will take their rightful place as the proper background of the romantic Bennerhassett story. ♣



Ranunculacea COLUMBINE



46.—COLUMBINE.
AQUILEGIA VULGARIS.
Blue, red, white. 2 ft. Fl., 1 in. June.

Editors

A correction to Flora Ann Bynum's article "A Plant List for the South" (Vol. XII, No. 3). While most SGHS members are familiar with our vice-president, Peter Hatch, we did not mean to omit his last name in the article.]

Notes

Two corrections for the illustrations in Michael Trostel's article "The Maryland Orangeries" (Vol. XII, No. 3). The captions for the Robert Cary Long, Jr. watercolor of Hampton Mansion (p. 3) should note of the original painting "Present whereabouts unknown," and the elevation and plan of the Wye House Orangerie (p. 4) is from *The Monograph Series*, No. 5, Vol. XVI, 1930.]

More on a Southern Plant List

by Peter Hatch, Charlottesville, Virginia



A common interest among all members of the Southern Garden History Society has been historical plant lists as a way of documenting plant introduction dates. Members of the society are ably equipped and eager to supply regional lists from their particular geographic area. A marvelous joint project for the society would be the pooling of these lists to create a "Southern Plant List." The society could edit and publish such a document, which could serve as a landmark research project for the study of Southern gardens. By involving all SGHS members, this participatory project could significantly further the Society's scholarly mission. Credit would be given to both the person submitting each list, and to whomever might be involved in the editing of plant names. Everyone can now be a contributor.

Flora Ann Bynum, who first announced this project in the last issue of *Magnolia* (Vol. XII, No. 3) has volunteered her supreme organizational skills to assemble the plant lists. In addition, a board of editors will be required to edit, annotate, and botanically identify the historical species and varieties, or review an annotation done by the submitter.

It is essential here that acknowledgement is provided, and that submitters avoid popular secondary sources that do not contain footnoted documentation.

I believe the goal for the first stage should be to assemble Southern plant lists before 1820. Undoubtedly, this will restrict the focus to the Atlantic seaboard states, but we are narrowing the scope of this first stage to gauge whether this is a manageable project. I also think we should include the entire South as defined in the mission statement of SGHS.

Stage two would include plant lists from 1820 to 1860.

Stage three might include pre-1900 lists.

The publication would begin with a general introduction on plant lists, including a mild disclaimer about the value of introduction dates. (Introduction dates do not necessarily mean a plant was in general cultivation; plants ordered or sought may never have been obtained or established; native plants are sometimes difficult to deal with because one is sometimes not certain they were indeed cultivated.)

The main body of the work would include the lists, organized either by state and region or by date, possibly cross-indexed by types of garden plants: trees, shrubs, herbaceous ornamentals, fruits, vegetables. Plants will be identified with their complete botanical name, when possible.

I believe we need to actively pursue these lists by keeping the idea before the members. *Magnolia* will include regular recapitulations of the purpose of the plant list as well as a seasonal tally of what has been submitted and by whom. ♣

Dr. William C. Welch, *President*

Peter J. Hatch, *Vice-President*

Flora Ann Bynum, *Secretary-Treasurer*

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