



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

Magnolia

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Hurricane Katrina's Impact on the Historic Gardens of New Orleans

As we all are aware, on August 29, 2005, Hurricane Katrina hit the city of New Orleans with devastating force. Two sites visited by SGHS members during the 2004 annual meeting sustained heavy damage during the storm and its aftermath. New Orleans City Park was particularly hard hit. Over 150 years old, one-mile wide and three-miles long comprising a total of 1,300 acres, City Park is one of the ten largest urban parks in the United State. It is located in the heart of New Orleans and is the largest recreation area for the entire metropolitan area. In the wake of the storm, 90% of the park was under anywhere from one- to ten-feet of water and approximately 40% remained underwater for several weeks. The water that entered the park was salt water from the Gulf of Mexico, which killed all the grass and most of the tender vegetation in The Botanical Garden. The Park's administration building was flooded with four feet of water and irreplaceable archives were lost, computers ruined and records soaked. Hundreds upon hundreds of the Park's 14,000 trees were toppled. Sections of the maintenance building collapsed and virtually every vehicle and piece of equipment the Park owned was destroyed. Because of the city's inability to meet payroll, all but 11 of City Park's 260 employees were furloughed. Many employees had also lost their houses and all their belongings.

Longue Vue House and Gardens, the 1939-42 estate of philanthropists Edith and Edgar Stern, also sustained widespread destruction. The site is internationally recognized as the master residential work of William and Geoffrey Platt and the master landscape design work of Ellen Biddle Shipman—once called “the dean of American women in landscape architecture.” The gardens and fountains were severely damaged and will take a tremendous amount of work to restore. Although all garden rooms were damaged, those that suffered the greatest harm were the Wild Garden, Oak Allée, and Canal Garden. The Wild Garden is a “contrived wilderness” featuring plants indigenous to Louisiana and is the only extant Shipman woodland garden. Famed Louisiana naturalist and artist, Caroline Dormon [see article by Karen Cole, “Caroline Dormon and the Gardens of Louisiana,” in *Magnolia*, Summer 2004, Vol. XIX, No. 2], procured and directed the planting of the native trees, shrubs and



[photo by Sally Reeves]

New Orleans City Park Botanical Garden, October 20, 2005

wildflowers that comprise the garden. The garden contains many rare Louisiana Iris cultivars, over 150 varieties of *Camellia japonica* and many native annuals and perennials. A tremendous number of felled trees also damaged the garden's plantings and virtually eliminated the necessary shade required for the survival of many of the indigenous plants. Majestic southern live oak trees, comprising the Oak Allée

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CALENDAR

Now through January 22, 2006. "Flowers by Redoute: Artist for an Empire," an exhibition at the New York Botanical Garden in the LuEsther T. Mertz Library. Tickets are available Online at www.nybg.org or call 1-800-965-4827.

February 16-17, 2006. "Southern Garden Heritage Conference" in Athens, Georgia. Sponsored by The State Botanical Garden of Georgia, the UGA School of Environmental Design, and The Garden Club of Georgia. Featured speakers include Peggy Cornett, Jim Kibler, Jim Cothran, Scott Howell, Richard Westmacott and Charlie Williams. For a program and registration information, please write, e-mail or call the State Botanical Garden, 2450 S. Milledge Ave., Athens, Ga. 30605, garden@uga.edu, (706) 542-1244.

March 11-May 20, 2006. "Plants in Print: The Age of Botanical Discovery," a traveling exhibit from the collections of the Chicago Botanic Garden in collaboration with the United States Botanic Garden, hosted by the Cherokee Garden Library, and on display at the Kenan Research Center at the Atlanta History Center. The exhibition features 34 rare books dating from 1483-1888. This is the only opportunity to see this stunning exhibition in the Southeast. "Plants in Print" draws visitors into a world of passion, science, and adventure through the pages of some of the most significant botanical books ever published. The Atlanta History Center is located at 130 West Paces Ferry Road, Atlanta, Ga. 30305. For more information, please call (404) 814-4046 or visit www.AtlantaHistoryCenter.com. This exhibition is free of charge.

April 7-9, 2006. "*From Prairies to Gardens,*" *Annual Meeting of the Southern Garden History Society, in Fort Worth, Texas.* Mark your calendars for next year's annual gathering. This will be an extraordinary setting for Society members. The meeting will expose the members to the native environment as well as several historic and private gardens that are influential to this area. We will visit the First Botanic Gardens in Texas and browse through their herbarium and library. See the article on page 9 for further details about the meeting. Registration brochures will be mailed to SGHS members in January 2006. For registration information, contact meeting coordinator Susan Urshel, 1312 Madeline Place, Fort Worth Texas, (817) 989-1480; seurshel@yahoo.com

April 22-29, 2006. 73rd Historic Garden Week in Virginia, sponsored by the Garden Club of Virginia, will include tours of historically significant James River Plantations: Belle Air, Berkeley, Tuckahoe, and Westover. A comprehensive guidebook, detailing tours and other information, will be available beginning in February by mailing a \$5 donation to: Historic Garden Week in Virginia, 12 East Franklin Street, Richmond, Virginia 23219. For further information: telephone (804) 644-7776; or visit their Web site at: www.VAGardenweek.org

April 30-May 3, 2006. "Celebrating the American Garden: Spaces for Relaxing and Entertaining," Colonial Williamsburg's 60th Garden Symposium. Creating spaces that unify the home and garden has been the goal of architects and garden designers for centuries. Americans continue to push their living spaces to the outdoors for both relaxation and entertainment. The exploration of that process and how it influences the developing American garden will be discussed. Co-sponsored by the American Horticultural Society and *Fine Gardening Magazine*. For registration information, contact: Registrar, Garden Symposium, Colonial Williamsburg, P. O. Box 1776, Williamsburg, Va. 23187-1776; 1-800-603-0948; www.ColonialWilliamsburg.org/conted

June 7-11, 2006. "Nova Scotia 2006: Cultural Routes and Roots," the annual meeting of the Alliance for Historic Landscape Preservation. The Alliance is headquartered at 82 Wall Street, Suite 1105, New York, N.Y. 10005. For further details, visit their Web site at www.ahlp.org

September 13-16, 2006. "Heritage Conservation at the Crossroads: When Modern Becomes Historic," the annual meeting of the Association for Preservation Technology (APT), at the Atlanta Hilton in Atlanta. For information, contact: APT, 919 18th Street, NW, Suite 900, Washington, D. C. 20006; (202) 263-2970; or email: apt@apt.org



Hurricane Katrina...

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[photo by Sally Reeves]



City Park Archives suffered irreparable water damage.

along the main entrance to Longue Vue estate, were exposed to high winds and brackish waters, which have caused trauma and may cause eventual death of these significant mature trees.

SGHS board member Sally K. Reeves, long-time resident of New Orleans and co-coordinator of the 2004 SGHS annual meeting, has submitted a very personal, first-hand account of the damage to City Park and Long Vue Gardens. The following is an excerpt of her letter to the membership.

"After two weeks of tending to family problems, I made it to City Park, where some 1,200 of its 1,300 acres were directly in the path of the floodwaters. Both the storm and the water had turned the park into a ghastly wasteland. The leafy over story was like a tattered piece of lacy fabric. Mountains of broken oak, pine, and sycamore trunks were everywhere. Every Magnolia grandiflora stood tall but dead with leaves of brown still affixed to the branches, its roots having fallen victim to asphyxiation from standing water. Roads and fields were strewn with piles of debris, greenswards blackened, and flowering shrubbery non-existent. In the Botanical Garden, clumps of surviving crinum lilies (they loved it!) looked like splotches of green in a moonscape. Meanwhile, the water lilies in the fishpond were blooming purple. But the rose garden was swept into oblivion, palms decapitated, elegant buildings trashed, and some of the Deco sculpture damaged. On a little row of dwarf yaupon bordering some of the garden was a waterline—a good sign marking off a level of brown from a level of green and possibly sprouting leaflets. But the park, which sadly has to operate entirely from self-generated funding, was in ruins physically and financially, its sorely needed revenue centers like golf, tennis, driving range, facility rental, and fund raising events put abruptly out of business. Those of the staff remaining were trying to survive in the only habitable building—the tennis center, near the natural elevation of old Bayou Metairie, a structure that had only a few inches of mud and a layer of worms to deal with. What was left of the staff (some 13 of 256) were trying to survive on makeshift

tables without power or phone lines, trying for the first five weeks to convince FEMA that the park (founded 1859) was a public agency and not a 'small business'.

"The City Park Archives in the ruined administration building had gone under three to four feet of water for several weeks in a windowless room where the mold had reached up the walls even to the records above the water line. The room was completely black, about 100 degrees, with a sickening aroma. You sloshed around on unidentified mounds of slurry paper, perspiration clogging the mask under which you breathed as infrequently as possible. The carefully interleaved files of original 1890s photographs sat waterlogged in their fireproof drawers, mold eating away at the emulsion layers. Drawers full of colorful modern snapshots—thousands of carefully ordered images of happy people enjoying or supporting the park for decades—were still in order in kaleidoscopes of stringy bleeding color. They were pretty, anyway, especially if you like Jackson Pollock paintings, and about as informative. With crowbars and a pair of flashlights aimed at the ceiling, we forced open the drawers filled with topographical and architectural drawings and photographs and carried out boxes of correspondence, waterlogged scrapbooks, master plans, posters and a world of park ephemera.

"Many other city facilities deserve mention. At Longue Vue Gardens, just feet from the 17th Street Canal, the newly renovated Spanish and Wild gardens were heavily damaged. The Stern mansion is intact, but the electrical, heating and cooling,

[photo by Sally Reeves]



Clean-up efforts at City Park.

and computer systems in the flooded basement were ruined. Oak trees forming the entrance allée lost significant branches. A large part of the Tulane University campus flooded, its buildings damaged by water filling basements and ruining machinery. At the Howard-Tilton Library, the Latin American Library and government documents division were submerged under nine feet of water. Xavier and Dillard Universities, hospitals, public and

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parochial schools and churches were flooded and remain closed in whole or partly.

"The good news is that the dire conditions I have described are changing. The American people have opened their hearts to this city and the Gulf Coast. Unlike our ancestors, who lived or died without outside assistance in repeated floods, fires and epidemics, we have had the enormous benefit of individual and national rescue efforts... Thanks to assistance rendered by a generous friend and local businessman, the City Park archives are in refrigerated warehouses, while the park and Botanical Garden are coming to life after weeks of volunteer and foundation-paid assistance. Although it will be difficult to raise our 10% match in a community where everyone is out of money, FEMA is promising 90% assistance, schools and businesses are opening, and the city has never been safer. The historical parts of the town escaped the flooding and are bristling with life, energy, and the power of art to confront the monster. They realize that we can never go back to pre-K business as usual. Thank you sincerely, Sally Reeves (Thanksgiving 2005)"

Further information for those wishing to provide financial assistance:

Checks can be sent to the **New Orleans City Park**, c/o State Library of Louisiana, 701 N. 4th Street, Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70802-5232. Donations can be made via a secure Web site at: www.neworleanscitypark.com. You may call (225) 342-4933 with questions.

Longue Vue House and Gardens has set up a donations page: <http://www.longuevue.com/donate.html>.

Amy Graham, the lead gardener at Long Vue, has written a letter requesting donations and assistance in the first stages of "re-greening" their gardens. They are seeking donations of seeds to re-build their native and children's gardens and for educational programs. Their areas of highest need are native plants, herbs, and vegetables. Call Amy Graham directly at (504) 837-8459 with any questions or suggestions. Donations may be sent to: Longue Vue House and Gardens, #7 Bamboo Road, New Orleans, La. 70124

Members in the News

Davyd Foard Hood gave a presentation entitled "Hugh White, Beaux Arts Architect of Gastonia," for Preservation North Carolina's 2005 Annual Conference in Gastonia and Shelby, N.C., held October 26-29.

At its recent annual meeting in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, the American Society of Landscape Architects inducted **Gordon Chappell**, ASLA, to its Council of Fellows. Chappell is Colonial Williamsburg Foundation's Director of Landscape and Facilities Services in the Operations Division. This year ASLA inducted 41 landscape architects to its Council of Fellows, a designation that acknowledges extraordinary work, leadership, knowledge, and service to the landscape architecture profession over a sustained period of time. It is the highest honor ASLA may confer upon a landscape architect.

SGHS board member **Susan Haltom**, who has been

instrumental in the restoration of the Eudora Welty garden in Jackson, Mississippi, participated in the symposium, "Great Visions, Great Gardens: The Writer's Garden," held at the New York School of Interior Design in New York City, October 28. The program, the third in a series presented by the Garden Conservancy and House and Garden Magazine, discussed the interconnectedness of the writers with their gardens and featured the gardens of Elizabeth Lawrence and Edna St. Vincent Millay as well as Miss Welty. These properties have received preservation assistance from the Garden Conservancy. Author **Emily Wilson** also spoke at the symposium, drawing from her recent biography of Elizabeth Lawrence, *No One Gardens Alone*. **Linde Wilson**, present owner of the Lawrence property in Charlotte, North Carolina, and **Dia Stieger**, the director of the nearby garden, Wing Haven, were also present.

Of Note

A one-hour PBS documentary, ***The Cultivated Life: Thomas Jefferson and Wine***, is airing nationally this winter. Narrated by Hal Holbrook and shot in Super16mm film for HD broadcast, the film is set against the backdrop of Jefferson's Monticello, the great wine regions of France, the Napa Valley, and the historic Virginia landscape. This documentary guides the viewer on a visual journey of the life of America's first wine connoisseur and the founding father of American viniculture. From his early experiments with Italian vigneroni at Monticello, to his grand tour through France and Italy in the 1780s, through his years in Washington D.C.

as President of the United States, and then his later efforts in retirement, *The Cultivated Life* culminates with the realization of Jefferson's dream of producing first-rate wine; first in California, and now in Virginia. The documentary features extensive interviews with Monticello staff members: Peter Hatch, director of gardens and grounds; Gabriele Rausse, vintner and assistant gardens and grounds director; Lucia (Cinder) Stanton, Monticello historian; and Dan Jordan, president of the Thomas Jefferson Foundation. The DVD is available at www.shoppbs.org

Evolution of the Lawn

By Wesley Greene, Colonial Williamsburg

I am often asked the question; “How did they cut the grass in 18th-century Williamsburg?” Perhaps the better question is; was there any grass to cut? While there were certainly green spaces in town as well as a few lawns around buildings such as the Governor’s Palace and a few of the gentry homes, there was no where near the ubiquitous presence of manicured lawns that you see around our buildings today.

The earliest English precedence for lawns seems to have occurred after the Norman invasion in 1066 AD. Prior to this time battles were fought with the Motte and Bailey fortifications. This was simply a hill surrounded by a wooden fence that was retreated to for fighting battles but was not lived in. It is the Normans who build the stone castles, originally composed of an outer wall surrounding a central residential structure called the Keep. The area between the wall and the Keep was called the Garth and it was here that the earliest lawns were developed, most commonly in a private space that became known as the Cloister. This new landscape feature was referred to as the mead or flowery mead. Chaucer gives a description of the mead in *The Legend of Good Women* (1386):

That of al the floures in the mede
Thanne love I most thise floures white and rede

He is probably referring to the English daisy but many other small flowering plants such as periwinkle, primrose, violets, ox-eyed daisies and gilly flowers (pinks) as well as fragrant herbs were employed to form the mead. These provided both color and fragrance to the space. Grass was also a component of the mead as Chaucer observes (in modern English this time):

Upon the small soft sweet grass
That was with flowers sweet embroidered all
Of such sweetness and such order overall

Order is the key word here in that all manifestations of the lawn or mead were an attempt to bring order to the landscape. Grass lawns, either by themselves or as an element of a mead were established by laying turf rather than through seeding. At Windsor Castle records show that in 1319–20 the gardener Adam digs 3,300 turves to lay on the Queen’s cloister. The sod or turves were cut with a turfing tool that looked like a spade with a crook in the blade that was slid underneath the grass to lift it. Lawns were also found around monasteries and cathedrals. In 1340 extra labor is hired at Norwich Cathedral to mow and “extract the moss from the cloister green.” Lawns also become a feature of cemeteries about this time.

The Castilian Spaniard, Petris d’Crezences gives us a good description of the process of establishing a lawn in his work *The Advantages of Country Living* (1306); “In preparation the ground is stripped bare of all vegetation, then boiling water is poured over the ground to scald it and kill the weed seeds and

then turves are layed on and pounded into place with wooden mallets.” The English called these mallets “beetles.”

A novel method of establishing turf is found in the French work *Maisons Rustique* (1564) in which the turves are laid upside down and “afterward danced upon with the feet.” Eventually the grass “did begin to peep up and put forth small hairs.”

The mead remained a common garden feature well into the 17th-century. Sir Francis Bacon (1561-1626) writes in 1625 of the elements composing the mead and providing fragrance: “but those which perfume the air most delightfully, not passed by as the rest but being trodden upon and crushed are three; burnet, wild thyme and water mints, therefore you are to set whole alleys of them to have the pleasure when you walk or tread.” The Cadillac of the mead though, was



Bodleian Plate, the public buildings and gardens of Williamsburg, ca. 1736-1740.
[from the book *The Pleasure Gardens of Virginia* by Peter Martin]

chamomile, *Chamomelum nobile*. Chamomile is domesticated around 1265 and although somewhat difficult to establish provides a very tough ground cover once grown in. In Shakespeare’s *King Henry IV*, Falstaff, in counseling Prince Hal on the vagaries of youth observes: “for though the chamomile, the more trodden on, the faster it grows, yet youth, the more it is wasted the sooner it wears.” In Williamsburg, John Randolph (1727-1784), in *A Treatise on Gardening*, writes of chamomile, “It is used medicinally, and in making green walks or edgings.”

The mead was mown with scythes only once or twice a year and I imagine would appear somewhat shaggy by today’s standards. The modern lawn seems to arise in the 17th-century and it is used to form formal areas, in which lawn borders are often cut into geometric shapes and walkways. John Evelyn (1620-1706), a prolific garden writer and founding member of the Royal Society, recommends in 1664

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that the grass at Hampton Court, “in those areas of the lawn that is used most frequently,” be mowed every fifteen days. By this time the mowing process involved scything, brooming, and rolling, in order. He also records that the scythes used for mowing are invariably sharpened “at that time of the morning when such noises are most tormenting.” Residents of Colonial Williamsburg’s Historic Area who are awakened at 5:30 in the morning by the grass-cutting crews may take some consolation in the fact that gardeners have been waking people up for hundreds of years!

It is in the 18th-century that the lawn comes into its own. In the second quarter of the 18th-century the English landscape is revolutionized by a series of garden designers that replace the old, rigidly formal gardens with the “picturesque.” This new fashion, which became known as the *Jardin Anglais*, strove to imitate the randomness of nature over the contrived formality of earlier gardens. One of its earliest pioneers was William Kent (c.1685–1748). The English historian, Horace Walpole (*History of the Modern Taste of Gardening*, 1785), writes it was Kent who, “leaped the fence and saw that all of nature was a garden.” His designs at Stowe, Rousham, and Chiswick House incorporated large areas of lawn, spotted with groves of trees and embellished with temples and mock ruins. This new fashion in the landscape is refined and popularized by Lancelot “Capability” Brown (1715–1783) and finally Sir Humphrey Repton (1752–1818) brings this feature to the general public in his designs of public parks.

These park-like settings were tremendously expensive to maintain and were found only at the wealthiest households. The rest of us have to wait for the invention and refinement of the lawn mower. In 1830, Edwin Budding, who was an English engineer for the textile industry, modifies a machine that he originally designed for shaving the knap of carpets to cut grass. In the next year, 1831, he demonstrates it at the London Zoological Park at Regents Park. This was the first reel mower and the park foreman reports after the demonstration that “two men, one to draw and another to push did as much work as 6–8 men with scythes and brooms.” In his patent application Budding writes, “Country Gentlemen will find in using my machine an amusing, usefull and helpfull exercise.”

John Claudius Loudon (1783-1843) writes in the *Gardeners Magazine* that same year: “We rejoice in this machine, it promises to be one of the greatest boons that science has conferred on working gardeners.” Not everyone agrees. Gardeners are, by nature, traditionalists and slow to adopt change. Jane Wells Loudon (1807-1853), his wife, observes in the *Ladies Companion to the Flower Garden* (1841) that the lawn mower is “a substitute for mowing with the scythe particularly adapted for amateurs but is proper to observe that many gardeners are prejudiced against it.”

The earliest mowers were large, expensive, ponderous devices suited for mowing in long straight lines but not well adapted for smaller gardens. They reached this country around 1845 and the most widely read American horticulturist of the time, Andrew Jackson Downing (1815-1852) observes in his

magazine, *The Horticulturist* (1849) that “mowers only work on perfectly level and smooth surfaces so that the scythe is still useful for general purposes.”

This does not slow the passion for a well-kept lawn. In 1863, Thomas Meehan (1826-1911), of Philadelphia, writes in his magazine, *The Gardener’s Monthly*, “The love for smooth lawns have progressed amazingly.” This love affair, however, is still reserved for those few who could afford the labor to maintain it.

John S. Charles, in his oral history of Williamsburg before the Civil War, [“Recollections of Williamsburg, Virginia, as It Was at the Beginning of the Civil War,” 1928], remembers just a handful of lawns in town. At the home of R. H. Armistead located on the old “four acre lot” bounded by Henry, Scotland, Prince George and Nassau Streets he remembers, “In front of this Old Colonial Home was a spacious lawn.” He also recalls “a beautiful grass lawn” at the home of Charles P. Waller that stood on Henry Street between Duke of Gloucester and Francis Streets as well as a “spacious grass lawn” at the Bright property near the corner of Francis and N. England. These three houses were substantial structures with residents who could afford the labor to maintain a lawn but lawns were not entirely reserved for the wealthiest residents. The jailers residence, which stood in front of the old jail on Nicholson Street had, “a pretty flower yard and lawn in front.”

While small lawns were certainly possible for avid gardeners of the period they were still the exception rather than the rule. In an “Address on Horticulture” by the Reverend Stephen Elliot, Jr. in 1851 he observes, “But where are our lawns? Where are the green spots that are to relieve the eye and cheer the exhausted nature? There are literally none. A green sward is almost as rare in Georgia as a pavement of Jasper.” Most southerners kept swept yards. This method of maintenance is often attributed to the African practice of removing all vegetation from the yard and then sweeping the area with twig brooms on a daily basis. Even in the north, where the climate is more conducive to lawns, they seem to be a rarity well into the 19th-century. *The Journal of the Geneva Horticultural Society* records in 1870 that 150 lawn mowers were sold in Rochester, New York that year adding that, “yet five years ago or even less outside of some half dozen places there was not a square rod of lawn about the city.”

It is in the last quarter of the 19th-century that the lawn becomes the defining feature of the American landscape primarily facilitated by two factors; the development of smaller, less expensive reel mowers and the move to the suburbs. Frederick Law Olmsted, the architect of Central Park in New York and the grounds of the Biltmore estate in Ashville, North Carolina, designed one of the first suburban landscapes in Riverside, Illinois in 1868. It was his vision that all of the properties be joined together with a sweep of lawn and trees from one block corner to the next. This may even speak to who we are as a people. In the typical European

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landscape there is a wall or hedge that separates you from your neighbor but here in America we are joined together by contiguous lawns of grass that makes it is hard to tell exactly where your property ends and your neighbor's begins, creating a very democratic, melting pot sort of landscape. Frank Jessop Scott, writing in 1870 about the development of the suburban landscape, observes: "whoever spends the early hours of one summer, when the dew spangles the grass, pushing grass cutters over a velvety lawn, will never be contented again in the city."

Which brings us back to the question: how were lawns managed in colonial Williamsburg? What made up the spaces around the buildings that we see on the Frenchman's and the Desandrouins Maps we have of 18th-century Williamsburg? The Desandrouins Map (ca. 1781-1782), in particular, does give us some indication of garden spaces. In period descriptions of Williamsburg properties "gardens" are often included, most likely vegetable gardens. There are also references to "yards" in property descriptions but these were almost certainly work spaces and were likely kept clear of grass and weeds, probably in the form of a swept yard. A pasture is mentioned at the Brush-Everard property but this could not really be considered a lawn area. Grass and weeds about the house invited insects like ticks and chiggers as well as the occasional snake and would be viewed as a fire hazard when it went brown in the winter. We scythe the orchard at the Colonial Garden and while we do not claim to be expert in the art, it is an arduous process resulting in a shaggy sward that I would not care to step out into on a dewy summer morning

There were certainly lawns at some residences in 18th-century Williamsburg. John Randolph, in *A Treatise on Gardening*, probably first compiled in the 1760s, lists in the garden calendar at the end of the work for the month of March, "you may begin to mow your grass walks, and continue so to do every morning, and roll them; turf this month." For the month of October he also advises; "turf this month." There is also some indirect evidence for lawns in Williamsburg. The inventory of Lord Botetourt includes a "grass hook" and pieces of scythes were found at a number of sites by our archeologists, the most complete example coming from the Hubbard site.

Several references from the early 19th-century indicate the presence of lawns at a few of the better residences about town. Joseph Prentis of Green Hill writes his son in 1804 and laments the dryness of the season, observing; "Our grass [is] perfectly burnt up." The Irish poet, Thomas Moore, visits Williamsburg in 1804 and legend has it that he was inspired to write the poem *To the Firefly* by "the beautiful lawn at Bassett Hall." A letter written by Dr. Barraud to St. George Tucker in May 1814 describes for Tucker, who is away from town, the appearance of his property from, probably, the back door; "I am now beholding the Lawn from your door, so beautifully green and so richly bespangled with the yellow flower – it is beautiful and serene." Apparently, gardeners were not so intent on lawns composed of grass and nothing but

grass at the time and could admire the inclusion of buttercups or even dandelions! The plan for the landscape at the Wythe house, done by Kate Millington Blankenship sometime between 1837 and 1844, shows a large area of grass in the area of the present orchard and vegetable garden.

Bowling greens were very popular and quite common. In 1721 William Levingston mortgages his property on Palace Green to Archibald Blair "together with ye bowling green." Bowling greens were found at Westover, Greensprings, and Fithian records a bowling green at Nomini Hall. Landon Carter records in his diary, April 25, 1772, "Talbot set to work yesterday to shave the bowling green, he seems to do it well, but he is very slow." He also takes steps to preserve the grass in the winter months. October 25, 1770, "I had my bowling green and other grass in the garden covered with flax."

Lawns also were found at the homes of country gentlemen. In the inventory of tools compiled by Jim Hollins he has found a number of grass scythes from surrounding plantations. The inventory of George Tuberville from Westmoreland County done in 1742 includes, "2 siths to mow grass." He has also found references to both sod knives and turf spades. By the last quarter of the 18th-century lawns are featured at Monticello, Mt. Vernon and many other plantation homes in emulation of the lawns that embellished the approaches to English country estates and were likely an element of the landscape of the larger homes, particularly on the perimeter of Williamsburg. The ramps, or terraces, that are found at many plantations as well as at the Governor's Palace and the Robert Carter House in town probably incorporated lawns.

Finally there are the green spaces in town around the public buildings. The Bodleian Plate (ca. 1736-1740) shows an elaborate garden at the College of William and Mary that would include a lawn to complement the formal arrangement of shrubbery. This landscape apparently remains relatively unchanged from its creation in the 1730s through the Revolution. In 1777 Ebenezer Hazard, a New York bookseller, describes the east approach to the Wren building as "a large Court Yard ornamented with Gravel Walks, Trees cut into different forms & Grass." The Palace Green was developed solely as an architectural feature and was almost certainly meant to be a green vista. The French officer Chevalier de Bore describes it in 1777 as "a big lawn extending to the second [Scotland] street." St. George Tucker describes the area in front of his house as the "Court House Green."

How these areas were maintained is a mystery. The College yard may have been scythed and it is possible that the Palace gardeners scythed the Palace Green occasionally. It is more likely that the Palace Green and other large areas around the Court House and, perhaps, the Capitol were maintained by animals. It was a common practice in England to maintain large grass areas with grazing sheep. Landon Carter records on March 19, 1770, "I had my Ewes first on my bowling green yesterday and then on the hill sides," although in this instance

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Evolution of the Lawn

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he seems to be more interested in providing sustenance for his animals than in practicing lawn maintenance.

While lawns can be viewed as an expression of wealth in the 18th-century, and were probably found primarily at the homes of the affluent, they are commonplace, almost to monotony today. Why do we do it? Why are we growing lawns throughout the arid Southwest in the face of severe water shortages? I like to ask my visiting school groups, “Why do we have to learn history? Why do we care about a bunch of dead people, what they thought and how they lived?” The most simplistic answer is that by knowing where you have been, you can make some sense out of where you are at. The

lawn may speak to this issue. One writer traces our obsession with the lawn all the way back to the Norman Conquest of England. It is about this time that sheep and the wool they provide become an important economic factor in England. If you have sheep, you will have a lawn so early in our collective psyche we picture the castle or the monastery, perched upon a hill surrounded by a vast sea of grass. There is something reassuring about this, signifying wealth and security. Another writer takes us even farther back. The earliest humans seem to have evolved in the savannahs of eastern Africa. A savannah is made up of grass with a few scattered trees, which perfectly describes our front yards today.

Remembering Anne Coppedge Carr

By Staci Catron-Sullivan, Atlanta History Center



Atlanta lost one of its most treasured community leaders on August 26, 2005 when Anne Coppedge Carr died peacefully at her home. She was a hardworking supporter of numerous organizations, serving as president of the Cherokee Garden Club and the Atlanta Junior League, board member and Trustee Emeritus of the Atlanta History Center, and chair of the Philip Trammell Shutze Fine Art Collection. She also actively supported the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, Forward Arts Foundation, Atlanta Opera, Friends of Spelman College, and, of course, the Southern Garden History Society. During her many years of leadership as a volunteer and Trustee at the Atlanta History Center, Mrs. Carr was an invaluable steward of the gardens of the History Center's campus. As the quintessential southern lady, she also frequently opened her home and garden for tours benefiting good causes.

Named one of “Atlanta’s Defining Women” by the Atlanta History Center in 2003, Anne Carr founded the Cherokee Garden Library in 1975. Through her foresight and wise stewardship for over thirty years, Mrs. Carr created the nation’s finest library devoted to southern garden history. Today, her legacy—the Cherokee Garden Library—houses the literature of 350 years of writing on human beings’ relationship with the land with over 6,500 volumes documenting landscape design, horticulture, botany, garden history, and the environment. The holdings include rare botanical books, texts by early botanists and naturalists, and nineteenth-century agrarian journals, as well as twentieth-century photographs, landscape drawings, and seed catalogs.

In 2001, Anne was awarded the Garden Club of America’s Amy Angell Collier Montague Medal for Civic Achievement. In support of Anne Carr’s nomination for the award, Southern Garden History Society member Jane Campbell Symmes wrote:

I think that her founding and developing the Cherokee Garden Library is a landmark gift of great distinction for Atlanta and indeed the nation. It has provided an unparalleled opportunity for the study of historic landscapes, gardens, and horticulture not only for southerners, but also for many from the rest of the United States and abroad who make use of the facility by telephone and e-mail. Though of great value now, it will only become more so in the years to come.

With a passionate love of life, books, and gardening, Anne Carr embraced the words of Roman orator Cicero as a philosophy that would govern her life: “If you have a garden and a library, you have everything you need.”

“From Prairies to Gardens,”

a preview of the 2006 Annual Meeting in Fort Worth by Susan Urshel, Fort Worth, Texas

The 29th-Annual SGHS Meeting will be in Fort Worth, Texas April 7–9, 2006. Known as the city “Where the West Begins,” Fort Worth embraces its cowboy heritage while moving into a city of today with diverse neighborhoods, an historical downtown, a stockyards area, and a cultural district with world famous museums. This spectacular city, which will be the backdrop for the 2006 meeting, is located at the forks of the Trinity River among rolling hills and surrounding prairies. The meeting will expose members to Fort Worth’s native environment, historical and influential gardens, and a Herbarium/Library, thus the name of the meeting “From Prairies to Gardens.”

The new Stockyards’ AmeriSuits’ 99-room hotel has been reserved for SGHS members. Registration will occur at the AmeriSuites and there is plenty to see within walking distance of the hotel. The hotel is located in the middle of the Historic Stockyards, where you can still see cows, horses, and cowboys. Friday, April 7, after lunch, the meeting will begin at the Fort Worth Botanic Garden Lecture Hall. Friday will focus on Douglas Chandor, an English portrait painter and his 1936 English style garden “White Shadows.” The garden was designed and built by Chandor and includes a gardens room, reflecting pools, fountains, a bowling lawn, grottos and a waterfall. Dr. Harold Lawrence will give a talk on the history of Douglas Chandor and “White Shadow.” We will then leave for a visit to the house and garden and a look at some of Douglas Chandor’s portraits and papers concerning the building of the garden. Dinner that night will be served at the historic YWCA downtown Fort Worth. Saturday, April 8th we continue the exploration of how this area went from prairies to gardens. There will be a presentation by Barney Lipscomb, Leonhardt Chair of Texas Botany, on “Discovering Texas Botanical Heritage,” about the botanical exploration of Texas, a 200-year love affair with plants. Then off on our adventure, in the morning we will stroll through the old part of Fort Worth Botanic Garden, the first Botanic garden in Texas. We will see the Stella Roan Prairie, a non-tilled prairie, within Fort Worth, and then visit and have lunch at

Dripping Springs, a 1930s party house. The afternoon will find us roaming in a Thomas Church garden and having tea in a Russell Page garden. Dinner under the stars in a Mexican courtyard will end the day.

Sunday will be an optional day. The garden tour will include several gardens that use native plants in their landscapes: the Kingsley Wu designed Japanese Garden is a garden loved and visited often by Fort Worth’s citizens and the Botanical Research Institute of Texas (BRIT). BRIT is a global institute for the conservation and preservation of botanical heritage through education, research, scientific publications and collections. BRIT is recognized nationally as a leader in botanical and environmental education and scientific research. Its herbarium houses a collection of over one million specimens representing most of the Earth’s plant families. The library contains over 75,000 volumes, including publications from the 16th century to the present. Botanical paintings and illustrations also are part of the permanent collections.

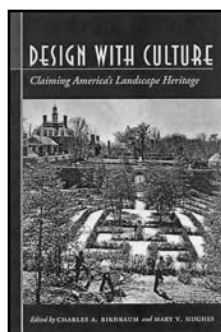
Fort Worth is also widely known as the “museum capital of the Southwest.” The Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth is the oldest art museum in Texas. The Modern is dedicated to collecting, presenting and interpreting postwar art. The new home for the Modern was designed by Japanese architect Tadao Ando. The Web address is: <http://www.themodern.org/information.html>. The Amon Carter Museum was designed by Phillip Johnson and has the houses the Amon Carter Paintings and Sculptures of Fredric Remington and Charles M. Russell. The museum collects, preserves, and exhibits the finest examples of American Art. The Web address is: <http://www.cartermuseum.org/information.html>. The Kimbell Art Museum is regarded as one of the most outstanding modern public art gallery facilities in the world. The Kimbell was designed by American architect Louis I. Kahn and the museum’s collection extends from ancient to modern times. The Web site address is: http://www.kimbellart.org/information/info_background.cfm.

Please note that all museums are **closed on Mondays**, so if you plan to visit these sites, arrive early.

In Print

Design with Culture: Claiming America’s Landscape Heritage, by Charles A. Birnbaum and Mary V. Hughes, published by University Press of Virginia, 2005, hardcover, 215 pages, ISBN: 0813923298

This collection of eight essays by well-known landscape historians, along with an introduction by Charles A. Birnbaum and Mary V. Hughes, considers the work of early preservationists and landscape preservation within its historical context. By revisiting planning studies, executed works, and critical writings from the years 1890–1950, these authors



uncover the holistic stewardship ethic that drove pioneering landscape preservation advocates, revealing their goal to be the imaginative transformation, as much as the conservation, of material culture.

The essays, which range from accounts of the professional contribution made by such figures as Charles Sprague Sargent and Frederick Law Olmsted to consideration of the roles played by women’s clubs and New Deal government programs, portray the spirit and tenacity of the early preservationists. In their focus on the transformation of entities such as Mount Vernon and the White House, as well as the rural countryside along the Blue Ridge Parkway, early preservationists anticipated several key issues—such as tourism, ecological

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Review: “Unearthing the Past—Planting the Future,” Restoring Southern Gardens and Landscapes Conference, September 29-October 1, 2005

By Davyd Foard Hood, Vale, North Carolina

In the Fall of 2003, when members of the planning committee for this biennial conference met, we initially considered a program to celebrate the “golden oldies” of Southern garden restoration. That topic was seen as a counter-point to the season’s Olmsted conference, held on the centennial of Frederick Law Olmsted’s death. It was described by some, metaphorically, as a *return to our roots*. A retrospective look at the achievements represented by the gardens restored at Mount Vernon, Monticello, the William Paca House in Annapolis, others supported by the Garden Club of Virginia, those here in Old Salem, and a host of smaller restoration and reconstruction projects throughout

peculiar growing in the South’s restored garden, a seemingly new exotic. Crisis is its common name. Its blooms can be disorienting, and no where more so than at Kenmore in Fredericksburg.

New technologies are calling into question issues that had long seemed settled. New research is also challenging other long-held assumptions about Southern gardens and gardening, landscapes, and land use. Historians are turning again, but along different avenues, to the issue of slavery and the southern landscape, to the role of master and slave in shaping and maintaining gardens and place, in town and country. How do we fairly and honestly represent the African-

American presence in a landscape where, today still, descendants of slaves are largely reluctant to visit? In short, garden restoration is approaching the milestone of retrospection and self-examination experienced by historic preservationists and architectural historians a generation ago.

The nine speakers on this program include both the voices raising new, important philosophical questions about garden restoration and professionals actively working in the field. Their prepared remarks and unscripted dialogue during the Friday evening panel discussion reflect those dual roles. Each brought a particular level of experience, insight, and commitment to the practice and history of garden restoration that has enriched our understanding.

As head of the National Park Service Historic Landscape Initiative, Charles Birnbaum has a unique perspective—and great responsibility. His enviable ability to see the particular qualities of place in a national context, and the accumulated evidence of time in public and private spaces, has informed both his writing and his talks. We were grateful recipients of this knowledge through his keynote lecture, “Reflecting on

Two Decades of Practice: Cultural Landscapes and Historic Preservation Today,” which kicked off the conference Thursday afternoon. The shift from a national perspective to one focused on a state was ably handled by William D. Rieley, principal of Rieley Associates in Charlottesville, Virginia, and Landscape Architect for the Garden Club of Virginia, who addressed the topic “Using New Technology to Understand Old Sites.” His long experience as an educator and designer facilitated critical explanations of the application of new technologies to garden restoration projects in Virginia. Thanks to him, CARPA (computer-aided reverse perspective analysis) is now a part of our vocabulary.

The three speakers Friday morning addressed both research and its practical application in Charleston, South Carolina and the surrounding plantation community. Martha



Conference speakers Allan Brown, Charles Birnbaum, and Will Rieley at the Single Brother's Workshop and garden.

the South. Such a program was tempting. These were classic gardens, long celebrated, but continually attracting new admirers and a new audience. The conference would have been easily organized. We could quickly call on our friends—Dean Norton at Mount Vernon, Peter Hatch and Peggy Cornett from Monticello, and others whose energy and intelligence have been critical to garden restoration in the South. It would have been a nicely wrapped birthday present to ourselves following on the 25th-anniversary of the first “Restoring Southern Gardens and Landscapes Conference” held here in 1979. But, we resisted self-indulgence. While celebration is important, we saw the larger opportunity for our gathering, and the higher obligation of this conference to challenge and inform, to respond to the many questions arising among both professionals and laymen in our community, and to lead that dialogue. We also saw something

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Review: “Unearthing the Past—...

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Zierden, Curator of Historical Archaeology at the Charleston Museum, spoke on “Archeology and Landscape Restoration in Charleston, South Carolina.” Her pioneering archaeological research at both the Simmons-Edwards and Nathaniel Russell Houses in Charleston have contributed to an unprecedented understanding of the richness and complexity of urban gardens and domestic landscapes in the wealthy port city. Her presentation also provided new documentation on the lives of master and slave, closely lived in the city’s relatively confined spaces.

Landscape Architect and Historian, C. Allan Brown also added a new term and concept to our working vocabulary, the restored garden as a “reconstructive synthesis.” But, alas, it is a term we may have limited opportunity to use. Mr. Brown has conducted extensive research on 18th- and 19th-century gardens in South Carolina and has consulted on two major garden restoration projects in Charleston at the Simmons-Edwards House and the Joseph Manigault House. His lecture, “The Garden at 14 Legare Street, Charleston, South Carolina: A Reconstructive Synthesis,” chronicled the process (1999-2002) of recovering the design and layout of the circa 1820 garden at the Simmons-Edwards House through extensive archaeological investigation and his own documentary research. His brilliant recreation of the circa 1820 garden at the Simmons-Edwards House, based in large part on the research of Ms. Zierden and the largesse of an intelligent client, reflect circumstances that all too rarely attend garden restoration.

Craig Hadley, Director of Education and Research at Drayton Hall, also brought a background of archaeology to his presentation: “Drayton Hall, Issues in Interpreting the Plantation Landscape.” There on the grounds of one of the truly great houses of colonial America, he is pressed with the challenge of accurately and successfully interpreting the setting of a house that now stands on a diminished tract of some 635 acres. While funding was no problem for Mr. Brown’s project on Legare Street, it is a critical concern at Drayton Hall, seemingly circumscribing the possible answer to every question from that of simple maintenance to the large possibility of interpretative restoration. At the end of the morning, having seen the splendid result of so much intelligent cooperation at 14 Legare Street, one ached for the potential that Drayton Hall represents—and has so far failed to meet.

In the afternoon Ann Miller, Consultant Historian at Montpelier, continued our examination of the Southern plantation landscape. Despite the caveat that many of the Madison and DuPont era records are lost or were deliberately destroyed, she presented an impressive account of the history of the presidential estate in her lecture, “Susceptible of Great Improvement: Documentary Records of the Historic Landscape at Montpelier.” I first knew it as a graduate student at the University of Virginia in the early 1970s, and the changes taking place to it now, and those destined for



[Photo by Peggy Cornett]

Conference attendees viewing the newly restored Single Brother's Garden. Jane White and Tom Burford of Lynchburg, Virginia are facing the camera.

the future, are bittersweet. The program of papers ended Friday with Keyes Williamson’s account of the gardening efforts and agricultural practices of the Single Brothers in Salem: “Square Roots: German American Landscape Patterns, The Community Garden, and the Restoration of the Single Brother’s Garden.” Having been instrumental in the planning for the restoration of their garden grounds as Old Salem’s former director of horticulture, he offered a unique insight into their history, preparing us for the first-hand pleasure of touring them later that afternoon.

Saturday morning’s program began with Landscape Historian Susan Hitchcock, of Atlanta, whose topic, “Documentation’s Role in Landscape Preservation: The Georgia Historic Landscape Initiative,” presented one state’s experience with the Historic Landscape Initiative promoted by the National Park Service. Georgia’s success, to date, should encourage all of our Southern states to undertake the systematic cataloging of important designed and vernacular landscapes. As in years past, our conference has ended again on a high note. Horticulturist, Ornamental Plant Historian, and author Denise Adams, of Dillwyn, Virginia, offered a fascinating overview of her work in documenting plants for historic Southern gardens. In short, she presented a lively, engaging précis of her book, *Restoring American Gardens: An Encyclopedia of Heirloom Ornamental Plants, 1640-1940* (Timber Press, 2004). It is a book, like Charles Birnbaum’s *Pioneers of American Landscape Design*, that we should all own and use to the benefit of our research and garden projects.

Book Review

Montrose: Life in a Garden, By Nancy Goodwin, illustrations by Ippy Patterson, Duke University Press, 2005, hardcover, 312 pp, 168 color illustrations, ISBN: 0822336049

On August 11, 1957, when Elizabeth Lawrence launched her weekly column in the *Charlotte Observer*, she illustrated its first appearance with a photograph of herself, standing beside her Ridgewood Avenue garden gate. It was invitingly open, and she beckoned the reader inside.

This is the gate of my garden. I invite you to enter in ; not only into my garden, but into the world of gardens—a world as old as the history of man, and as new as the latest contribution to science; a world of mystery, adventure and romance; a world of poetry and philosophy; a world of beauty; and a world of work.

As the reader advances through the pages of *Montrose: Life in a Garden*, through its gate of words, beautifully crafted by Nancy Goodwin, one comes to appreciate the enormously rich complexity of gardens that Miss Lawrence described. History is certainly present, in a house and grounds long the Hillsborough home of the Graham family and one of its sons who was a governor of North Carolina. It continues its course as the home of Nancy and Crauford Goodwin since 1977, as the site of a renown nursery from 1984 to 1993, and as the place where the Goodwins have made a garden estate of world fame that is now a preservation project of the Garden Conservancy.

Montrose, the garden, reflects all the other attributes of a garden cited by Miss Lawrence, and it embraces others, namely music and art—Nancy Goodwin is a life-long musician and one who remains committed to the harpsichord above other instruments. The mathematics of music are evident in her writing, in the choice and rhythm of words; and so, too, in the gardens at Montrose, where sympathetic and sometimes dissonant harmonies of color, texture, and scale resonate through its sequence of garden spaces punctuated by cast-iron urns and pots. Music is also present in the voices of songbirds who keep company with Mrs. Goodwin, her staff of gardeners, and those who come to visit while maintaining vigilance of the family cats and black snakes who also claim (usually unseen) place in the garden.

Numerous books have been written on the subject of art in the garden and the art of gardening, and both themes could be addressed here in the context of Montrose. But, I am thinking more particularly of the creation of the Montrose gardens while Nancy and Crauford Goodwin were pursuing a second passion—the art of Bloomsbury—and collecting the works of its artists. I have not seen their collection, but having enjoyed an interest in the Bloomsbury circle since 1972, when I was in England as the first volume of Quentin Bell's seminal biography of his aunt Virginia Woolf appeared, my collection is limited to uncounted books. As a visitor to Montrose one perceives the resonance of Bloomsbury in its gardens, in the exceptional, artful and liberal combination of plants, in

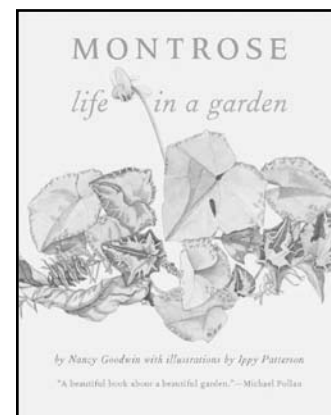
the rich, often bold color harmonies that spread across its landscape, in the pattern of garden spaces, and between the lines of Nancy Goodwin's paragraphs.

The pages of *Montrose: Life in a Garden* also confirm Miss Lawrence's description of the garden as "a world of work." The Goodwins came to Montrose and its sixty-plus acres in 1977 and that fall moved plants from their small earlier garden in Durham. Garden-making continued at Montrose, with Nancy Goodwin following Kathleen Long Graham's practice of rooting boxwood from her own cuttings.

Through the 1970s and 1980s she also came to develop a critical knowledge of her property, its soils, climate, and a favored, exceptional group of plants, including her beloved cyclamen. This period was a prelude to the two great eras of gardening at Montrose. During the first, beginning in 1984 and continuing to 1993, she operated the now legendary Montrose Nursery. The death of a garden assistant, Jo Petty, in July 1992, was an epiphany. Nancy Goodwin describes it as "a turning point in my life." The very success of the Montrose Nursery and its demands on her time, cast in the prism of Jo Petty's death, forced Mrs. Goodwin to a terrible decision between two enviable choices: whether to continue the mail-order nursery that first brought acclaim to Montrose and her efforts, or to end the commercial operation and give herself entirely to the making of gardens. She announced the closing of the mail-order business in the spring 1993 catalogue and shipped the last plants that year.

There can be no argument with her decision. In retrospect the nursery was one means to a larger, greater end, the life-long dream of gardening and garden-making. That dream was realized on the grounds of Montrose and in the pages of *Montrose*, where Mrs. Goodwin moves through the year month by month. In winter 2002 she began keeping a record of her work, and that of her assistants, which comprises the structural core of this book. Interspersed in these undated day-by-day or weekly records are accounts of gardening through the quarter-century since the Goodwins came to Montrose in 1977. Theirs is, indeed, a life lived in a garden and one handsomely illuminated by prose and the color drawings of Ippy Patterson. If an award exists/existed for the most beautiful garden book of the year, *Montrose: Life in a Garden* would surely win it.

Davyd Foard Hood, book review editor
Isinglass, Vale, North Carolina



In Print

(continued from page 9)

concerns, and vehicle access—that confront practitioners today. Birnbaum and Hughes illustrate not only the similarity of experience between early and modern landscape preservationists but also the immense impact that their decisions had and still have on our daily lives. *Design with Culture* will prove an indispensable resource for understanding the history of landscape preservation for landscape architects, architects, planners, amateur and professional gardeners, conservationists, preservationists, and anyone with an interest in history, travel, and national parks.

Charles A. Birnbaum is coordinator of the National Park Service Historic Landscape Initiative in Washington, D.C., and the founder of the Cultural Landscape Foundation. He is the coeditor of *Pioneers of American Landscape Design and Preserving Modern Landscape Architecture I and II*. Mary V. Hughes is University Landscape Architect for the University of Virginia, where she also serves as a lecturer in the Department of Landscape Architecture.

Contributors: Charles A. Birnbaum, Mary V. Hughes, Catherine Howett, Phyllis Andersen, Thomas E. Beaman Jr., Elizabeth Hope Cushing, David C. Streatfield, Cynthia Zaitzevsky, Ethan Carr, and Ian Firth

On Foreign Soil: American Gardeners Abroad, by May Brawley Hill, published by Harry N. Abrams, 2005, hardcover, 160 pages. ISBN: 0810958988

The very act of making a personal garden implies that the gardener feels at home, and creating a garden in a foreign country requires a special character. This handsomely illustrated volume features gardens by fascinating Americans, from Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson to Edith Wharton and Gore Vidal, who have planted their roots in England, France, and Italy since the earliest days of our nation.



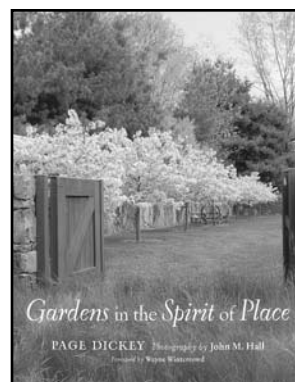
In a readable text filled with insights into expatriate life, art historian May Brawley Hill describes how American gardens on foreign soil, like autobiographies, reveal the personalities, values, and experiences of their makers. Henry James began as a novice, but quickly developed a flair for growing flowers. Gerald and Sara Murphy lived well in their beautiful flower garden at Villa American in Antibes. Art historian Bernard Berenson loved to take walks in the garden he invariably left his wife to tend. The first book to study American horticultural society abroad, this delightful book, illustrated with period prints, photographs, and paintings, will captivate all those interested in gardening, great American thinkers, and life as a foreigner.

May Brawley Hill is an art historian with a special interest in American art and a passionate interest in gardening. She is the author of several books on American gardens and has

contributed articles to a number of journals. She also is a member of the Southern Garden History Society and has lectured and participated in the “Preserving Southern Gardens and Landscapes Conference” at Old Salem, Inc. and at other historical organizations in the South.

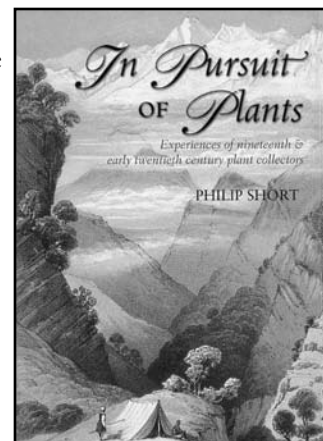
Gardens in the Spirit of Place, by Page Dickey with photographs by John M. Hall, published by Stewart, Tabori and Chang, 2005, hardcover, 192 pages, ISBN: 1584794720

“Consult the genius of the place in all,” Alexander Pope famously wrote, advocating gardens that are in harmony with the landscape rather than imposed upon it. *Gardens in the Spirit of Place* takes an insider’s tour of some of the most beautiful examples of this philosophy, “reflective gardens” that celebrate their regional origins above all. Fourteen gardens across the United States are profiled in this stunning book, including SGHS member Ruth Knopf’s gardens and rose collections on Sullivan’s Island, South Carolina.



In Pursuit of Plants: Experiences of nineteenth and early twentieth century plant collectors, by Philip Short. Published by Timber Press, 2004. Hardcover; 376 pages. ISBN: 0881926353

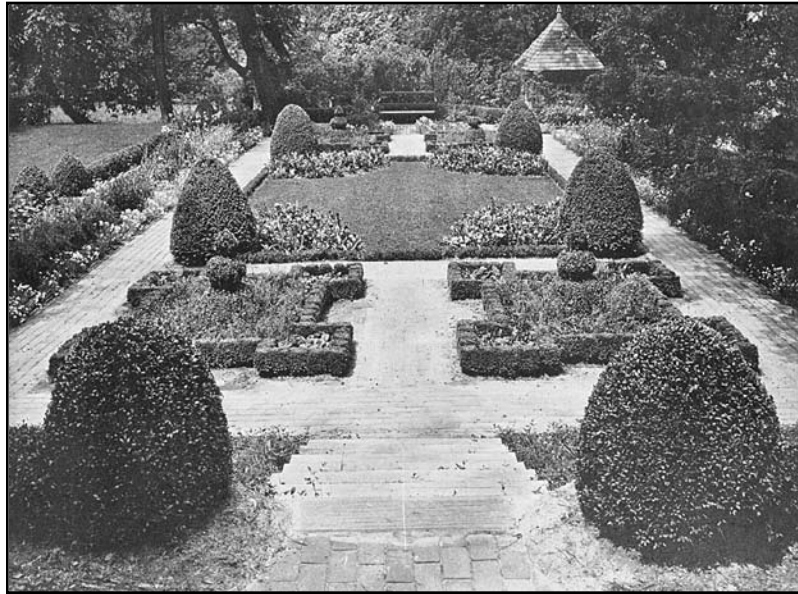
In Surinam plant hunter F.W. Hostmann allowed vampire bats to suck his toes; Thomas Drummond was attacked by a bear in the North American woods; George Forrest narrowly escaped rampaging lamas in western China; and, in Fiji, Berthold Seemann recorded which plants cannibals used as an accompaniment to human flesh. These and other incidents are recorded in this compilation of fascinating first-hand accounts of the experiences of 19th- and early-20th-century collectors in their pursuit of plants from around the world. Extracted from journals and letters, the accounts are a mix of adventure, of sometimes grim but always captivating and occasionally humorous images of a lost world, and of stories of the practical problems associated with plant collecting. Notes about the collectors and commentary on the plants they gathered are included, as too are appendices detailing development of the Wardian Case for the shipment of live plants and the role of herbaria in the discovery and naming of plants.



The Myth of the Colonial Herb Garden

By Arthur O. Tucker, Delaware State University, Dover

During an “Open Garden Day” tour of my 1950s Cape-Cod-style home in Kent County, Delaware, a visiting “landscape purist” informed me that my herb garden was “not



© F. S. Lincoln

Garden of the Carter-Saunders House [photos for this article are from the book The Restoration of Colonial Williamsburg in Virginia, December, 1935]

authentic to a Colonial home.” I consider such individuals “Landscape Police,” for, at even the slightest provocation, they are eager to declare that some arbitrary principles of landscaping have been violated. But, his comments caused me to reflect on the myth of the Colonial herb garden. I have quoted the following “mythtakers” (as Rudy Favretti, one of the leading experts on period landscaping, has termed them¹), as I have actually heard them in my work on period plants and gardens. While my purpose, however, is to encourage informed appreciation of Colonial herbs and herb gardens, at the same time, we should remember that absolutes do not exist, especially in gardening, where each garden is a reflection of the personality of the individual gardener, both now and in yesteryear.

“First, over there, I want to put in an authentic Colonial herb garden to set off my authentic house and furnishings.”

Rudy Favretti has written: “If we could only get garden restoration committees to be as indoctrinated with correct principles as they are with the herb garden notion, we will have achieved much.” The concept of an American Colonial herb garden is essentially a twentieth century idea.² The only North Americans who had herb gardens in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were *some* doctors (most physicians bought or bartered for herbs), apothecaries, and botanical gardens, but these herb gardens were almost entirely devoted to medicinal herbs.³ The Shakers grew and dried herbs for sale,⁴ while the Moravians were known to have grown separate plots of medicinal herbs.⁵ I have searched and searched, but I have never found an instance in history where an entire garden was devoted to all variety of herbs by the average gardener. Yes, medieval monasteries and some Tudor

estates had herb gardens, but these were not vernacular gardens.⁶

How did this myth arise? The phenomenon can be traced to the Colonial Revival period in America when there was a great movement to recreate the gardens of the Colonial era. While this movement had its beginnings in the late nineteenth century, it is most commonly associated with John D. Rockefeller, Jr.’s pioneer work in the restoration of Williamsburg, Virginia and the creation of Colonial Williamsburg during the 1920s. But, we must not lose sight of the fact that many other groups were swept along with the tide of Colonial restoration. By the early 1930s the National Park Service undertook restorations of eighteenth century sites, and the Civilian Conservation Corps put professionals into the field too. Yet, the landscape decisions made at Colonial Williamsburg were repeated time and time again across the United States.

Charles B. Hosmer, in *The Colonial Revival in America*, has remarked: “Trained in twentieth-century concepts of design, landscape architects became artists who helped perpetuate the idea that the life of the past was always blissfully harmonious. There was a conscious refusal to accept the conclusions of research reports that implied colonial gardens had been simple, functional, and even somewhat bare.” Furthermore, “it is essential to know that the real decision makers—John D. Rockefeller, Jr., and William Archer Rutherford Goodwin—had idealized views of the past. Their goal was to recreate an attractive picture of the eighteenth century, and they often used terminology in their correspondence that bordered on the artistic. The idea of painting a picture for visitors was a means of bringing back the past.”

The *dramatis persona* in the garden restoration at Williamsburg was the landscape architect Arthur A. Shurcliff (Shurtleff pre-1930) of Boston, Massachusetts. The severest arguments erupted when Shurcliff tried to erect features not found in colonial Virginia, such as the maze in the palace garden. According to a quote cited by Hosmer, Shurcliff said: “I think the authenticity of mazes in England at our period is a more important matter for us to consider than mazes in Virginia at that time.” Besides, we note in retrospect, more people would pay to see a maze than they would to see a cow pasture. Hosmer also cites Mrs. George P. Coleman, wife of the mayor, who remarked in her diary that Shurcliff “urged us all to grow red geraniums in profusion! I have grave doubts as to the presence of red geraniums in Virginia in Colonial Days, and I have no partiality to them at any time.” In the end, however, Shurcliff prevailed.⁷

What was common to our Colonial times? Vernacular gardeners, although they used herbs, grew them here and there, wherever there was room and they grew well. The more sophisticated vernacular kitchen gardens were often based upon the four-square idea with raised beds, which originated in northern Europe and dates back to medieval times. Perennial vegetables, such as rhubarb, and perennial

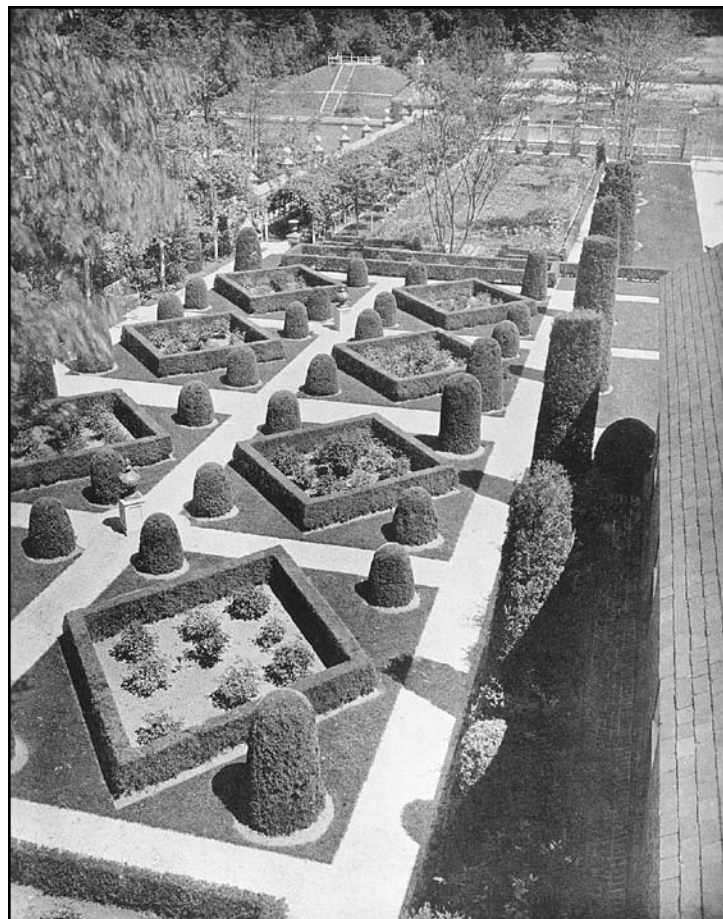
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The Myth of the Colonial Herb Garden

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herbs, such as horseradish, were planted along the perimeter of the garden. While borders of lavender, southernwood, and/or box may have been used sometimes, most of the garden was annually tilled and often raised. Herbs were scattered about where they had ecological niches; for example, mints were often planted near the well, pump, or spring.⁸ The Colonial gardener was, above all else, practical, and recognized that trying to stuff all plants labeled as “herbs” into one uniform niche called the “herb garden” was both unsound and impractical.

We must remember, too, that the word “herb” had a different meaning that did not come to denote those plants we call “herbs” today until the latter part of the eighteenth century, which is also the time that “vegetable” was used to mean a plant cultivated for food! Until the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, vegetables of today were called “herbes.” As Helen Leach has written, “Rather than examining changes of meanings individually, they should probably be treated as a complex of related terms undergoing contraction, or innovation and expansion, in an independent way.”⁹ Helen Leach further points out that, starting with Parkinson in 1629,¹⁰ we find a grouping of plants under three categories: a “Garden of Pleasure,” containing “all sorts of pleasant flowers,” a “Kitchen Garden,” and an “Orchard.” Thus, variegated, golden, and double forms of hyssop were included in the flower section, while the common hyssop was put in the garden section, and Parkinson reserved a few



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At east wall of palace garden, looking south formal garden seen from roof of palace.



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forms for a garden of “Simples” to be covered in later books. While Parkinson did not discuss knot gardens, his “Garden of Herbes” was a kitchen garden and not set out in knots, which were part of his “Garden of Pleasure.” To quote Leach, “To Parkinson, herbs meant in the first instance useful plants (mostly non-woody). He recognized overlapping categories of ‘sweet herbes’ (meaning sweetly scented), ‘kitchen herbes’ (including what we would call vegetables as well as culinary herbs), and ‘physical herbes’ (meaning medicinal).” John Evelyn’s *Acetaria* of 1699¹¹ is another famous work. His “Kitchen-Garden herbs” included parsley, spinach, and other pot-herbs (contraction from the French *potager*). Evelyn’s “Medicinal Herbs” were discussed in the Kitchen Garden section, so we can conclude that is where they were grown the. Evelyn’s “sallets” included the lettuce as the foundation, accompanied by chervil, young radish tops, cornsalad, mustard, cress, purslane (with a balance of the “cold” and “hot”). “Winter sallets” were made from boiled beetroot, skirret, or carrot roots.¹²

“Of course, my Colonial herb garden has to have a bee skep in the center.”

This is another myth that I often see perpetuated today. For one thing, the woven units being sold today are not skeps

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Kitchen garden seen from kitchen outbuilding in kitchen garden of palace.

anyway, but rather plant cloches or shades. No entries are visible for the bees to escape! An uncovered and unshaded bee skep roasts and/or drowns in the summer and freezes in the winter and surely results in dead bees. In Colonial times, bee skeps were properly placed in shaded, protected bee shelters, sometimes in a garden wall or next to a house or outbuilding. Actually, as romantic as the bee skep may appear, more often than not the Colonial beekeeper used a bee house when the necessary carpentry skills were available, or, in a more primitive (and cheaper) fashion, the bee log.¹³

"And a knot garden, that's Colonial too, isn't it?"

Along with the Colonial Revival, America participated in an English Tudor revival, and somehow the two became entwined. While no records of the true knot garden, typical of Tudor gardens, can be found in Colonial American gardens, cutwork parterres were installed in the gardens of not only the elite but also the more ardent vernacular gardener. Parterres of boxwood, while not always successful in the south, were the goal of American gardeners. For example, William Faris's garden in Annapolis, Maryland, a craftsman's garden, had numerous flower beds edged in boxwood. We also know of squares, rectangles, and more elaborate designs for gardens

from the late eighteenth century map by Warner and Hanna in Baltimore.¹⁴

One consideration prohibiting good knot gardens in North America is our limiting climate of hot summers and cold winters, coupled with drought and abundant pathogens. The knot garden at the Tudor garden in Hampton Court in England is certainly beautiful, but have you ever tried to grow one outside of Great Britain? *Phytophthora*, *Verticillium*, *Fusarium*, *Pythium*, *Rhizoctonia*, and/or nematodes (especially abundant on the Eastern Coastal Plain) may suddenly strike one herb; it then proceeds to wilt within a week, and then all along down the line like dominoes. If you try to replace the herbs, they are of different sizes and look silly, and these usually die just like their predecessors anyway. Winterkill is another tragedy of knot gardens in the U.S. (especially the South), although this is most often due to weakening of the herbs due to one of the soil-borne fungi in late summer.¹⁵

"Well, I want to frame my Colonial herb garden. A split rail fence would be authentic."

Restraining laws on livestock were not passed until the third quarter of the 19th-century in most communities. This indicates that cows, pigs, goats, geese, and chickens were on the loose until then. Have you ever seen the havoc wrought by a pig or a goose in a garden? Even cows, leaning over a small fence, will consider your luscious vegetables and herbs as delicacies put there for them alone. Fences during these eras had to be "horse high, bull tight, and pig strong." Small wonder, then, that front yards of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were fenced off with tall, tight fences; you did not see the unfenced, bare, communal space of modern suburbia.¹⁶

"I saw the neatest plantings at Villandry in France that would fit nicely in my restored Colonial carpenter's house in Delaware."

Above all, we now realize that we must emphasize site specificity. What is appropriate in France is not appropriate in the Southern and Mid-Atlantic Regions of the United States. This would seem to be quite obvious, yet I have also run across gardeners who think that the gardens of the Colonial elite, about which much has been written, were also the gardens of the vernacular landscape.

"I want to grow lots of native herbs because the Colonials grew them."

If you could gather native North American herbs from the field or forest, why cultivate them? The Colonials certainly had no need to cultivate our natives when they could be gathered for free. Some popular native herbs used by the Indians and also used by the Colonials included: red cedar, white cedar, hemlock, beebalm, senna, Jimson weed, sweet flag, noble liverwort (hepatica), and bloodroot.¹⁷

Sassafras was one of the most important eighteenth-century North American herbs and also important to the London Company as an item of trade. Sassafras was used to prepare tea, root beer, and saloop, a sassafras tea with milk and sugar and sold as late as 1872 on London street corners to

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The Coke-Garrett house view from garden.

people on the way to work. Sassafras was also believed to be a remedy for stomach aches, venereal disease, and fevers, and it was used to purify the blood, but today we know that it causes liver cancer.¹⁸

"I know that the Colonials used boxwood and ivy lavishly."

Please remember that Peter Kalm¹⁹ in his tour of North America c.1750 mentions ivy only once, and I find only infrequent mention of boxwood in period references. While the gardens of the elite had parterres and topiaries that were probably composed of boxwood, there was never the lavish use of boxwood that we see today at Colonial restorations. Boxwood and other large shrubs, though, were the closest things to wash lines in early Colonial times. Bodies and clothes were rarely washed (the American Indians, who bathed in streams and built sweat lodges, were right: these European invaders did stink!), and so wash lines and clothes pins were not common either.²⁰

"Basil! I want lots of basil and all its forms. That's typically Colonial, isn't it?"

Basil may have been available to elite gardeners of Colonial times, but it was not very common (and certainly not in the variety we have today). We know that in 1623 Elder Brewster at Plimoth Plantation divided his plot with parsley, sweet chervil, sorrel, and other pot herbs set on one side the path, and sage, thyme, spearmint, mullein, fennel, and bitter medicinal herbs along the other.²¹ Josselyn's *New England's Rarities Discovered* of 1672²² mentions cultivated plants to which the average New England gardener had access and includes: French mallows, chervil, burnet, winter savory,

summer savory, thyme, sage, spearmint, feverfew, lavender cotton, pennyroyal, ground ivy or ale-hoof, houseleek, elecampane, coriander, dill, anise, sorrel, roses, celandine, fennel, and clary. Other herbs in the Colonial era include: wormwood, southernwood, rosemary, rue, chamomile, borage, bugloss, watercress, marjoram, violets, tansy, chives, poet's marigold, comfrey, and lavender.²³

Be especially cautious, however, of merely taking the period name and assuming that it is identical with the twentieth century name. Today, *Rosa gallica* L. is commonly called the apothecary's rose or the red rose of Provins, while *R. damascena* Mill. is the damask rose. In the past, however, *R. gallica* was sometimes called *R. rubra*,²⁴ the "Red officinal Rose,"²⁵ the "English red Rose,"²⁶ the "Red Rose,"²⁷ or the "red damask."²⁸ In other instances, the damask hybrid 'Royal Four Seasons' was called the "red damask."²⁹

Today spike lavender is *Lavandula latifolia* Medik., common lavender is *L. angustifolia* Mill., and lavandin is *L. xintermedia* Emeric ex Loisel. In Johnson's edition of Gerarde's *Herball* of 1633,³⁰ however, his "Lauender Spike" probably is actually *L. angustifolia*,³¹ while his "Common Lauender" and "White floured Lauender" probably are *L. xintermedia*.³²

As another example, today *Mentha aquatica* L. is the musky-scented water mint (high in menthofuran), while the "citrate" form, which is glabrous, male-sterile, lavender-scented (high in linalool/linalyl acetate), is called bergamot or orange mint (sometimes designated *M. citrata* Ehrh.). In Gerarde's *Herball* of 1633, however, his "Water Mint"³³ is our bergamot mint of today, while his "second kinde of water Mint"³⁴ is our water mint of today.

"Well, it's my money, and I want a Colonial Revival herb garden, then."

These are but a few of the common "mythakes" or notions held by those who make decisions on gardens or grounds restoration. Just keep in mind Rudy Favretti's succinct statements: "A recent survey of visitors to historic sites found that most visitors accept what they see as authentic. We do them a great disservice to exhibit untrue concepts. The same survey also showed that visitors like to see landscapes that are different from what they see every day in the twentieth century. This is what makes their trips and admission fees worthwhile."³⁵ Yet, visitors have come to expect Colonial herb gardens at Colonial home or restoration sites. Old Sturbridge Village in Massachusetts accomplishes the dual task of authenticity and education very nicely; near the entrance is a large herb garden where visitors can literally "get it out of their system" before entering the authentic plantings in the Village.

[Dr. Tucker's article is from his lecture for the "Restoring Southern Gardens and Landscapes Conference," held October 1999 at Old Salem, Inc. in Winston-Salem, N. C.]

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Endnotes

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³⁰ "We have in our English gardens a small kinde of Lauender, which is altogether lesser than the other, and the floures are of a more purple colour and grow in much lesse and shorter heads, yet have they a farre more gratefull smell: the leaves are also lesse and whiter than those of the ordinarie sort. This did, and I thinke yet doth grow in great plentie, in his Maiesties priuate Garden at White Hall. And this is called Spike, without addition, and sometimes Lauender Spike: and of this by distillation is made that vulgarly known and used oile which is termed *Oleum Spica*, or oile of Spike."

³¹ "The second differeth not from the precedent, but in the colour of the floures: For this Plant bringeth milke white floures; and the other blew, wherein especially consisteth the difference."

³² "Water Mint is a kinde of wilde Mint, it is like to the first Garden Mint, the leaues thereof are round, the stalkes cornered, both the leaues and stalkes are of a darke red colour: the roots creepe far abroad, but euery part is greater, and the herbe it selfe is of a stronger smell: the floures in the tops of the branches are gathered together into a round eare, of a purple colour."

³³ "The second kinde of water Mint in each respect is like the others, sauing that the same hath a more odoriferous saour being lightly touched with the hand: otherwise being hardly touched, the saour is ouer hot to smell vnto: it beareth his floures in sundry tufts or round les ingirting the stalkes in many places; and they are of a light purple colour: the leaues are also lesse than those of the former, and of a hoary gray colour."

³⁴ Favretti, *Landscape "Mythtakes" in Historic Preservation*, 3.

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