

Intimate Landscapes

Restoring Virginia's Historic Gardens

BY MARY HINTERMAN



The land has shaped life in Virginia as surely as Virginians have shaped the land. The Commonwealth is a national leader in innovating new ways and means to conserve, restore, and protect its landscape patrimony, including those most intimate of landscapes — Virginia's gardens.

The Garden Club of Virginia's philanthropic effort to fund historic garden restoration started in the Piedmont in 1927. The GCV held a fair at Monticello and raised \$7,000 to preserve Thomas Jefferson's few remaining trees on the lawn. That three-day fair grew into the statewide event now known as Historic Garden Week — the oldest, and largest home and garden tour in the country.

Selection for GCV garden restoration assistance is briskly competitive because of the program's record of painstaking historical accuracy. William D. Rieley, principal of Rieley and Associates in Charlottesville, is the landscape architect for the Garden Club of Virginia and a key partner in achieving this internationally recognized level of historical restoration. Rieley works with property owners and the GCV's Restoration Committee on project research, design, and implementation of the restored or renovated gardens.

In addition, he oversees the work of the recipients of two GCV Restoration Fellowships awarded annually to graduate students in landscape architecture. Sonia Brenner, the 2010 William D. Rieley Fellow, documented the garden at Salubria, a beautiful Georgian house and "falling garden" built by the Rev. John Thompson and his wife, the former Lady Spotswood, near Culpeper.

"The work of the Garden Club of Virginia in restoring and enhancing

historic gardens and landscapes throughout the Commonwealth is unparalleled in this country," Rieley said. "The addition of the scholarly work of the Garden Club's fellows further enhances this amazing record. It is all made possible through the generous contributions of time by the members of the Garden Club of Virginia."

All project historical documentation and restoration designs are shared with the Virginia Historical Society, University of Virginia, and other repositories to benefit future generations of students, historians, and garden lovers.

More than 40 sites have benefited from the restoration of their historic gardens by the GCV team; seven of these historic properties are in the Piedmont. GCV's work in these gardens is described below. All of these properties are regularly open to the public; it is best to call ahead to confirm visiting hours.



At Orange County's Montpelier, the duPonts' formal garden was built on the site of the original horseshoe-shaped garden of James and Dolley Madison.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



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PHOTO COURTESY OF MONTPELIER.

Oatlands

*Leesburg 20175
Phone: 703-777-3174
Website: www.oatlands.org*

Oatlands, a National Trust property, is one of the last of the string of great houses built by the descendants of Robert “King” Carter. GCV restored 60 feet of the historic north forcing wall, a stepped brick wall with stone base and wooden caps, and replaced the box-wood edging on the eastern parterres.

**State Arboretum of Virginia,
Blandy Experimental Farm**

*Boyce 22620
Phone: 540-837-1758
Email: Blandy@virginia.edu
Website: www.virginia.edu/blandy*

Colonel Joseph Tuley, Jr., the son of a successful tanner, built the Tuleyries, a Gilded Age house, in 1834 on a large tract of land near Millwood. GCV restored one half mile of long stone wall along the historic dogwood walk.

Burwell-Morgan Mill

*Millwood 22646
Phone: 540-955-2600
Website: www.vahistorical.org/gardenclub/burwellmorgan.htm*

Nathaniel Burwell, a Tidewater planter, and Daniel Morgan, a Revolutionary War general, constructed of the original stone mill in 1782. Predominantly native plants enhance the mill’s park-like setting. Planted pathways provide a scenic walk through the grounds of the oldest operable merchant mill in the Shenandoah Valley.

Montpelier

*Montpelier Station 22957
Phone: 540-672-2728
Website: www.montpelier.org*

Architect: Rudy J. Favretti (1992), William D. Rieley (2008, 2009) The GCV undertook the restoration of the duPonts’ formal garden, built on the site of James and Dolley Madison’s original horseshoe shaped formal garden, including wall repointing, gate restoration, sculpture conservation, and perennial planting plan development. Today the garden displays a succession of blooming perennials through the season and features the duPonts’ ornamental additions.

University of Virginia

*Charlottesville 22903
Phone: 434-924-6015
Website: <http://www.virginia.edu/uwatours/gardens/gardensHistory.html>*

The Garden Club of Virginia was contacted about restoring the Pavilion Gardens after World War Two. In the Pavilion Gardens are many of the flowers and shrubs that Jefferson grew in his gardens at Monticello, as well as those familiar to 18th-century gardeners and writers. Their design reflects garden styles popular during Jefferson’s lifetime. The five West gardens were restored by 1952 and dedicated that year. The East gardens were dedicated in 1965. Though different because of the topography



Dogwoods and stone walls frame the entrances into the State Arboretum at Blandy in Clarke County.

— the West gardens are relatively flat and the East gardens are on a steep slope — the end result is equally impressive.

Monticello

*Charlottesville 22902
Phone: 434-984-9822
www.monticello.org*

Garden Club of Virginia has played a small, but important role over the years in the overall restoration of Monticello’s gardens according to Jefferson’s original garden plans.

What's Next?

Thomas Jefferson’s Poplar Forest is the next historic garden to benefit from GCV restoration. You can help in this effort by attending one of the more than three dozen 2011 Historic Garden Week tours April 16-23.

Tours in the Piedmont include:

April 16	Albemarle-Charlottesville: The Morven Estate Gardens Orange Club Tour: Historic Green Springs area
April 17	Albemarle-Charlottesville: Farmington Country Club Area
April 18	Albemarle-Charlottesville: Country Homes and Gardens Leesburg: Brandon Plantation (grounds and gardens)
April 19	Albemarle-Charlottesville: University of Virginia Pavilion Gardens and Houses
April 20	Warrenton
April 21	Warrenton

More information is available at www.vagardenweek.org and www.gcvirginia.org