



The Post Serial

Volunteer Newsletter of Hillwood Estate, Museum & Gardens

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GALA CELEBRATING HILLWOOD'S NEW EXHIBITION

Alison B. Cassels, Development Associate

On June 4 Hillwood opened *Living Artfully: At Home with Marjorie Merrivether Post* with Marjorie Post flair. Under the leadership of three superb co-chairs and a hard working committee and Advisory Council, we welcomed a record of over 350 guests on the kind of spring evening dreams are made of. As one board member commented, "I venture to say Hillwood has not seen the likes of that since Mrs. Post's era at Hillwood."

The Estate was bustling with a broad array of DC society, friends old and new. At any point in the evening, one could overhear first-hand accounts of Marjorie Post's artful living from other attendees including Marjorie Post's "extra men" for her events, Hillwood and Topridge guests, and, of course, family. While visiting the pink fallout shelter, Marjorie Post's great grandson recalled playing there as a small child with his brothers, and searched for small murals they colored on the walls (since painted over.)

Members, volunteers and newcomers alike enjoyed a first look at *Living Artfully* during a ninety minute cocktail reception. After enjoying the usual who's who and the delicious 1960s inspired Harvey Wallbangers in the Motor Court, guests flocked to experience special access to the fallout shelter, Pavilion balcony and projection booth, and massage room in the Mansion.



Gala attendees visiting the Pavilion Balcony and the Fallout Shelter in the Mansion

Of course, with a theme of *Living Artfully* we could not resist adding Marjorie Post touches throughout the evening. From her traditional event stationery (Cranes white with gold lining and embossed Post family crest) at check-in to Marjorie Post's favorite hors d'oeuvre of beef served on a toast round, the old days of Hillwood were not too far off that evening. The dinner's main course of salmon en papillote (a dish that enjoyed popularity in the 1960s for VIP dinners) was chosen at the dinner tasting when Ellen Charles, Post's granddaughter, recalled eating the dish on numerous occasions at her grandmother's dinners at Hillwood.



Cocktail hour in the Motor Court



Inside the gala tent on Lunar Lawn

Perhaps the most memorable Marjorie Post tribute of the evening was the design of the dinner tables. Numerous archival photos served as inspiration for monochromatic tables that coordinated tablecloth, seat cushions, plates, stemware, and flowers. Each table was topped with breathtaking floral arrangements created by none other than Hillwood's Jason Gedeik, head of greenhouse and design operations, with the tireless help of horticulture staff and volunteers for two full days prior to the gala.



Table settings in the gala tent



Archival images of the Mansion Dining Room

The annual benefit gala is more than just a glamorous and memorable night at Hillwood. It is a vital vehicle for renewing relationships with existing patrons and cultivating new relationships to ensure the vitality and success of Hillwood's mission. From your generous contributions to the financial success of the gala to the invaluable time and expertise you display at events across the year, Hillwood volunteers play a critical role in maintaining the standard of excellence Marjorie Post bequeathed to our shared institution. We cannot thank you enough for your contributions at EVERY level!

For more images from the gala, visit Hillwood's [Facebook](#) page.

HILLWOOD HAPPENINGS

All Hillwood volunteers are invited to take advantage of these tours, workshops and other activities. Please register in advance on the sign-up sheets on the clipboard in the Horticulture Building hallway or contact Bill Johnson at (202) 243-3927 or bjohnson@HillwoodMuseum.org. Advance registration is not necessary for continuing education events in the Visitor Center Theater unless otherwise noted.

How to Watch Videos Online

To view the videos of past lectures, visit <http://volunteer.HillwoodMuseum.org> and click on the Education tab at the top of the website. Select “Lecture Video Archive” followed by the year (for example, “2013 Lectures”). To access a video, select a link and enter “volunteer” for the password.

Field Trip: Fern Valley

U.S. National Arboretum

August 16 (Friday), 10 a.m.

The summer is a great time to study ferns and enjoy native woodland plants. Joan Feely, curator for Fern Valley, will share her knowledge of these plants and focus on the evergreen ferns that look their best in the late summer. Meet at the parking lot at Fern Valley at 10 a.m.; for car-pooling, meet in the Horticulture break room at 9:15 a.m.

Plant ID Walk

August 22 (Thursday), 9 a.m.

On this walk, participants will study the plants with summer interest. Meet in the Horticulture break room.

Perennial Traditions:

Marjorie Post’s Floral Designs

September 11 (Wednesday), 7 p.m.

From Palm Beach, to the Adirondacks, to Washington, D.C., visitors to the grand estates of Marjorie Merriweather Post could always expect to be entertained flawlessly. While the activities varied—from private afternoon teas in Hillwood’s Breakfast Room to large parties befitting a royal

household— magnificent floral arrangements were a constant. Vivid, rarely seen images from the Hillwood archives explore the floral design trends Post embraced throughout the decades. Discover how Post elevated the standard floral designs of the 50s and 60s by leveraging her large private orchid collection for fresh cut flowers. Join Jason Gedeik, head of greenhouse and design operations, for a virtual behind-the-scenes tour to see how Hillwood’s horticulture staff continues this sixty-year tradition of growing cut flowers in the Cutting Garden and Greenhouses for beautiful floral displays year-round.

Please call (202) 686-5807 to reserve a space. \$20, \$10 Member, \$7 Student. This program is considered continuing education and is therefore free for all active Hillwood volunteers. (Visitor Center Theater)

Field Trip: Mary Livingston Ripley Garden September 12 (Thursday), 10 a.m.

The garden we will be seeing is wonderful but it is the gardener who is the highlight of this visit. Janet Draper studied plants in the U.S. & Europe and has a vast knowledge of horticulture that she shares freely. The garden is basically a garden with no rules... segregation is thrown out the window, so annuals, perennials, woodies, tropicals, and bulbs are all crammed in a curvaceous 1/3 of an acre garden. Janet feels if something is capable of photosynthesis, it is a candidate to be included in the garden. She likes to showcase great plants that are underused in our area. Meet at the Mary Livingston Ripley Fountain (Garden is between the old Arts and Industries Building and the Hirshhorn Museum). The best Metro stop is the Smithsonian Station Mall exit, and then head toward the Capitol. Please use the signup sheet in the Horticulture Building.

A Day of Horticulture

September 23 (Monday), 10 a.m.–2 p.m.

Join us in the Visitor Center Theater for a series of presentations by the horticulture staff.

- **Gardens at Hillwood:
Way Back When, Then & Now**
Plants don't stop growing, winds don't stop blowing. Learn from Jody Fetzter, garden supervisor, how time, weather and the valiant efforts of horticulturists have shaped and preserved the landscapes at Hillwood over the decades.
- **Basic Garden Botany**
Botany is the study of all plant life. Join Jessica Bonilla, lead gardener, as she covers the basic elements of botany with emphasis on the practical elements that pertain to the gardener and plant identification.
- **Off The Beaten Path**
Take a virtual tour with Brian Barr, director of horticulture, of the non-garden areas at Hillwood. Some of the behind-the-scenes areas include the fence line that borders Rock Creek Park, the nursery, the incinerator, the deer gate and the compost area.
- **Compost Man**
Hillwood garden volunteer John Wheeler has compost man in his e-mail address. John will share his knowledge of how to use compost in the garden and how to create good compost: where, what to compost and what not to compost. The science (biology, chemistry, and physics) and engineering (odor management, pile size, oxygen transport) of composting will also be discussed. John picks up coffee grinds from Starbucks every week for his compost, we will also find out if this keeps his compost awake at night.
- **Fall Seasonal Display Preview**
Jason Gedeik, head of greenhouse & design operations, will give a brief overview design process for the seasonal displays. Learn about what's new for the autumn garden display and how parts of the summer display will transition into the fall and winter.

Plant ID Walk

September 25 (Wednesday), 9 a.m.

This walk will focus on the plants of interest around the Mansion and some of the fall

blooming bulbs. Meet in the Horticulture break room.

MUSEUM SHOP

Lauren Salazar, Head of Merchandising

Nichelle and I will attend The Accessories Show in New York on August 4 to select new wearables for the fall and winter. Our main goal is to find fabulous new jackets and accessories. I will also attend the New York gift fair in mid-August to source gift items for the fall, the holidays and Strathmore's Museum Shop Around. Look for new merchandise to start arriving in the Shop in October.

In time for the holiday season, we have created three new items exclusive to Hillwood:

- **Hillwood Tea Towel**
Well-known designer Mary Lake Thompson has put her painterly spin on an image of the lovely south façade of Hillwood for the tea towel. Packaged neatly for gift-giving, the towel sells for \$ 10.95.



New Hillwood tea towel in the Museum Shop

- **Russian Boyar Wedding Bride Ornament
Nuptial Crown Ornament**
Driven by the popularity of *The Boyar Wedding Feast* painting and the Nuptial Crown, we commissioned St. Nicolas of London to create ornaments based on these collection objects. The results are two ornaments, made exclusively for Hillwood. Each ornament is

lovingly hand-crafted in Thailand or India. For 25 years St. Nicolas has worked with a small Christian charity in Thailand that helps disadvantaged rural women find work in their community. Some 200 skilled women work at home sewing the ornaments. All of the Russian Bride ornaments are made in this way. The Nuptial Crown ornament is handmade in India, using the traditional method of zardozi embroidery. It is a highly skilled technique using gold wires and pearls to embellish the Nuptial Crown ornament. Either would make a lovely addition to the Christmas tree for \$ 10.95 each.



New ornaments in the Museum Shop

I'm happy to introduce a new addition to our Museum Shop family. Lauren Pierce has joined the Shop as a full-time Sales Associate. Lauren brings strong retail experience from Vera Bradley in Tyson's Corner, VA. A Fine Art degree from the Maryland Institute College of Art has strengthened her creativity, work ethic and a strong desire to work in a museum environment. Please join me in welcoming Lauren to Hillwood.

Upcoming Events:

- Fall Fashion Boutique
October 29 – November 2
- Strathmore's Museum Shop Around
November 14 – 17

- Holiday French Market
December 3 – 7
- Staff & Volunteer Holiday Discount
December 3 - 31

PUBLIC PROGRAM UPDATES

Erin Lourie, Adult Audiences Manager

Programming celebrating *Living Artfully* will kick into high gear this fall with displays of classic American cars (Sunday, August 18), a lecture on Marjorie Post's floral design (Wednesday, September 11), an in-depth study day on interior design (Saturday, September 21), and a lecture series on managing great estates (throughout October).

Living Artfully is also a major focus for our annual Gay Day festival, which will be held on Saturday, September 28. After a family pancake breakfast (10 am-12 noon), the afternoon will feature talks by Hillwood experts Estella Chung, curator of *Living Artfully*, Jason Gedeik, head of greenhouse and design operations, Howard V. Kurtz, curator of costumes and textiles, and Rebecca Petillo, former curatorial assistant. Community partners including the DC Lambda Squares, Not What You Think (a cappella ensemble), Straight Eights Car Club, and DC Swing! will join the festivities.

Back from summer hiatus, preschool programs will be offered in September, October and November. A Family Fun Sunday on September 15 celebrates a children's book called *Anna and the Hermitage Cats*.

As always, the best source of information on Hillwood's programs is the [calendar](#) section of our website, located under "What's On".

NEW STAFF MEMBERS

Please join us in welcoming the newest members to join Hillwood:

Horticulture

Andrew 'Andy' Ehret joined Hillwood's horticulture division April 29, 2013 as a permanent, full-time gardener. Andy's upbeat attitude, energy and experience operating a landscape business with his brother prepared him well for joining us to accomplish the challenging tasks of planting, pruning, mowing and maintaining Hillwood's formal gardens.



New Gardener Andrew 'Andy' Ehret

Andy has a degree in Landscape Technology from Montgomery College in Germantown. Andy is a quick learner; you will already see him operating the specialized Putting Green mower and our new, large walk-behind Kawasaki Viking mower. Andy loves being outdoors fishing, golfing and playing baseball (as catcher and umpire) in his spare time. Please say "hi" to Andy when you see him in the gardens--catch his eye--because he is hearing impaired and is excellent at reading lips.

Security

Anatoly Grinev has joined the Hillwood Security team as a security officer. Please bid him welcome as you see him around campus in the coming days. Among his many strong characteristics, he is a fluent Russian speaker and is currently a Corporal in the US Marine Corps Reserves.



New Security Officer Anatoly Grinev

We have another new staff person: Jordan Mitek is a familiar face because this is his second season working with Horticulture in the gardens as a temporary summer seasonal. Going forward, Jordan will also be wearing the uniform of a security officer. Until the end of the summer, he will split days between working as a security officer and helping in the gardens. We are delighted to have Jordan with Hillwood year-round in his new position.



New Security Officer Jordan Mitek

Visitor Services

At the end of July we saw a new face at Hillwood in Visitor Services. Please join us in welcoming Caitlin Smith as our new Visitor Services Associate. Caitlin will begin her work in Museum Studies at George Washington University this fall.

We will see her at Hillwood on Tuesdays, Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays.



Visitor Services Associate Caitlin Smith

DEPARTMENT PROFILE: VISITOR SERVICES

Christy Wallover, Newsletter Volunteer

“When we’re doing it well is when visitors have no idea all of this is going on.”

-Katy Albertson, Head of Visitor Services

This remark on visitor services at Hillwood Estate, Museum and Gardens is aptly put. Dedicated to the visitor experience at every level, the visitor services department juggles many jobs. From managing the front lines with the visitors, to handling the call center and reporting in the back office, this department works hard at keeping all of their “plates spinning in the air.” The priority for VS is to coordinate all aspects of the visitor experience. They can be the first voice heard by the visitor and the last to see them at the end of their visit. Daily operations include visitor support services such as welcoming and orienting visitors to Hillwood, appropriate signage around the campus, administering ADA policies, and managing the visitor database which collects attendance and revenues data for the estate. VS then interprets the raw data for different departments across the campus including security, marketing, interpretation, public programs, and the café.

At the helm of this extensive operation is Katy Albertson, the head of visitor services. Katy’s background in early American art history and practical experience in product design at Nordstrom give her a keen eye toward visitor services at Hillwood. Before coming to Hillwood in July 2011, Katy worked at the National Museum of the American Indian in their visitor services department. That experience boosted her interest in working with the public in a museum environment and finding the connection between the public and museums. At Hillwood, Katy still deals with this connection but also has a role in the operational aspects of the institution. Her work varies from engagement with the public to collaborating with other Hillwood colleagues by “making the visitor experience meaningful for other departments.”

The VS department consists of seven staff members. Arthur Kim, Visitor Services Manager, has been with Hillwood for roughly six years. He supervises the part-time staff; Sarah Bartel, Hannah Shambroom, and Caitlin Smith, who staff the front-line work at the information desk in the Visitor Center and the phones in the call center. The staff also has two full-time coordinators, Lauren Strack and Jan Jensen. They, along with Arthur, handle back office reporting, financial reporting, database management, ADA compliance, AV system trouble-shooting as well as keep an eye on campus-wide logistics, signage and day to day visitor needs.

The daily goal for this team is to convey a “sense of gracious welcome, à la Marjorie Post herself,” describes Katy Albertson. An important quality that Katy highlights about the VS staff is their sense of heart. She adds, “The heart of [VS] is a genuine love for people and real sense of caring for people. That applies to the visiting public.” Each member of the team tries to understand what the visitor experiences, they care about how the visitor’s day is going, and they try to anticipate what the visitor’s needs are. This sense of caring translates to how the VS department works with

their colleagues across campus. As the head of VS puts it, “we’re all in it together.”

Helpful Video from The Wallace Collection

Lisa Leyb, Interpretation Volunteer Manager

To accompany their recent exhibition *True Colours*, the Wallace Collection in London posted a [video](#) on their website showcasing the conservation of a commode created by Jean-Henri Riesener for the use of Queen Marie-Antoinette in her private study. Using the findings from their conservation project, the Wallace Collection digitally reconstructed the colors of the original commode.



*The Riesener Commode in the
Wallace Collection after conservation*

This video provides some helpful insights into Riesener’s work and will certainly give you a deeper appreciation of the two Riesener commodes on view in Hillwood’s Entry Hall. Thank you to Mansion Docent Kevin Tomaine for sharing this link with us!

VISUAL RESOURCES – LIBRARY NEWS

*Kristen Regina,
Head of Research Collections & Archivist*

The library is pleased to welcome Vada Komistra as the Visual Resources Associate until Marla DiVietro returns later in the year. Marla is delighted to be expecting (any day now) a baby girl. Vada comes to Hillwood from the National Gallery of Art, Research Library, and Catholic University. She has two Master’s degrees – one in library science and another in art history. Marla and Vada have worked with seemingly effortless energy during this transition, Marla sharing her expertise about visual resources as well as a comprehensive knowledge of Hillwood. Vada is also covering the bare-bones of Pat Lynagh’s library assistant position. You can reach Vada in the library Monday through Friday, at extension 3969 or 3953. Stay tuned for baby pictures – coming soon!

CONSULTANT OUTLINES FIVE-YEAR PLAN TO UPDATE HILLWOOD’S GARDENS

Betty Cochran, Newsletter Volunteer

In March, volunteers heard landscape architect Rodney Robinson describe the recommendations of his firm’s five-year plan for editing and enhancing Hillwood’s gardens, presented at a continuing education session. Mr. Robinson was retained by the Board of Trustees last fall to work with board members and horticultural staff in editing and updating some of Hillwood’s most mature gardens. Joining him in this session were Executive Director Kate Markert and Board President Ellen Charles.

Over the years Hillwood has renovated or restored many of its special gardens, Kate said, including the Japanese-Style Garden, French Parterre, and Putting Green. But the large beds that connect these garden rooms have been

allowed to mature with very little editing. The board wanted to work with a landscape architect who understood and respected historic gardens and Mrs. Post's approach to the landscape.

After reviewing proposals and meeting with various firms, last fall the board unanimously selected Rodney Robinson Landscape Architects of Wilmington, Delaware. They were impressed with the firm's experience and sensitivity especially with historic projects, Kate said. The firm's many clients have included Longwood Gardens, Winterthur, Ladew Topiary Gardens, Scott Arboretum, and Chanticleer, and it oversaw the recent restoration of the French-style gardens at Nemours in Wilmington.

Robinson then sketched out his ideas and recommendations for Hillwood's gardens for the next several years, illustrating with photos from Hillwood's archives and with current photos to show how various garden areas have changed over the years. He listed the five goals of the project:

- **Enhance the visitor experience by extending the “seasonality” of the gardens** to make them more interesting in all seasons. In Mrs. Post's time, the gardens were largely a huge, exuberant spring display, with not a lot going on in the other seasons, he said.
- **Revitalize the plantings.** The first step is editing—deciding what to take out—which is easier for someone from outside to make suggestions about, he said. Then there will be new additions, or new palettes, of plants. The project isn't just a historic restoration, Robinson said; it will also introduce new plants as appropriate to restore the vibrancy and exuberance that Hillwood's gardens have always had.
- **Increase the horticultural diversity.** New plants will be added in the spirit of Mrs. Post's time.

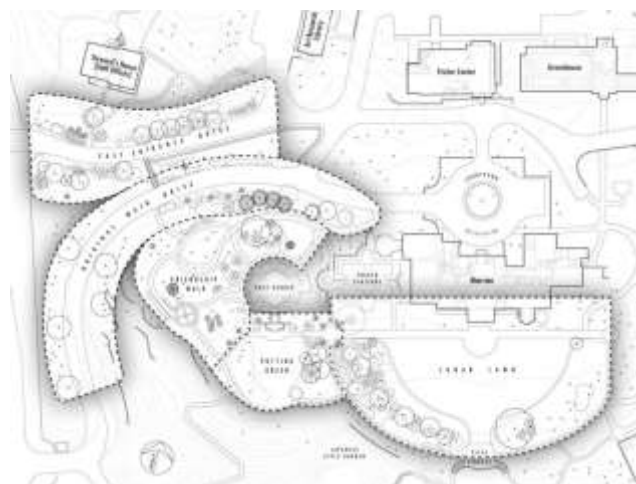
- **Improve the connectivity between gardens,** by opening views and framing views. Right now it's easy to get turned around or lost within the gardens because of the many curved paths, and because many sight-lines have been blocked by shrubs and trees that over time have grown too large.

- **Communicate Mrs. Post's passion for excellence to visitors.**

The first thing Robinson and his staff did was to familiarize themselves with the original design intent of the gardens, through the many photos in the archives. They also assessed current garden conditions, ranging from plant health, soil structure, and drainage to plant diversity, plant size, views, and seasonality. They met with horticultural staff to find out what the staff's challenges were and how they felt about the gardens.

Identifying target areas

Then Robinson and Hillwood together identified the areas that they felt were in the greatest need of attention: the Lunar Lawn, the area around the Putting Green, Friendship Walk, the lower entrance drive (main drive), and the upper entrance drive.



Garden areas that will be the focus of Robinson's work

As for the Lunar Lawn—the area considered in most need of attention—archival images showed a much greater amount of plant color and

exuberance, with evergreens of various sizes providing a contrasting background for the blooming plants. Current views show how the evergreens have grown, in effect marching to the front of the beds and taking over, Robinson said, with only a thin strip of flowers in front of them. There's now a sameness in the size of the shrubs, contrasts have disappeared, and the nature of the garden has changed from the original intent, he said.



Archival image of the Lunar Lawn



Current view of the Lunar Lawn

Archival photos of walkways around the Lunar Lawn, and paths in many other locations, show that originally the plantings were banked or sloped back from the paths: plants edging the walkways were low, and plants gradually increased in size with greater distance from the walks, producing a sense of openness. But many shrubs have grown up and out toward the edge of the walks, creating a wall or tunnel effect, he said, and

also blocking views that would give visitors a greater sense of where they are. To return to the original design, the recommendation is to prune back or remove many of those plants.

In some locations, around the Lunar Lawn and elsewhere, tall trees that provided high shade—the tree canopy—have been lost to storms or age over the years. That not only changes the original design but causes plants that need shade to decline, Robinson explained. Because it takes a long time for new trees to grow tall enough to restore that canopy, the recommendation is to plant, where needed, smaller trees such as cherries and hawthorns that will grow fast and provide a lot of color and texture. After 10 or 15 years, as the canopy trees become tall enough, the smaller trees can be edited out.

Considering plant palettes

In discussing what kind of plant palettes could be used in the Lunar Lawn, and elsewhere, Robinson said that although English ivy, vinca, and pachysandra were the standbys for groundcover many years ago, there are now many wonderful, colorful groundcovers that can add diversity. For shaded areas, they include heucheras, carex, astilbe, and epimedium.

For shrubs and other choices, the many possibilities include hydrangea, with its extended season of bloom, which the staff are already planting; specialty plants such as edgeworthia, which blooms in January or February; the conifer chamaecyparis for screening in sun or shade; and viburnum, which produces flowers and then fruit for seasonality.

He also showed recommended plant palettes for the other four targeted areas, indicating that plants that look good and work well, such as the boxwood and other shrubs in Friendship Walk, would be left as they are. Only where there are problems—such as good-sized plants that are within five feet of each other, or a multitude of plants that are within a small area and have to be continually pruned—would some plants have to

be edited out. And sites in which plants have been lost, such as the area behind the Rose Garden, would also receive attention. There, after the soil has been improved, the plant palette might include viburnums, redbud, and more spirea, plus hellebores, sarcococca, and hosta, which would introduce a richness on the ground level. In some places, trees now lost would be replaced—for instance, a columnar evergreen that once provided a strong architectural element near the Putting Green; or cherry trees along the lower entrance drive; or several blue spruce, which provided fine color contrasts, along the upper entrance drive.

Elsewhere, among features that Robinson commended is the long flowering border on one side of the walk to the Greenhouse. It's absolutely splendid and visitors love it, he said. The recommendation is to repeat it on the other side of the walk, after soil problems there are addressed.



Hillwood's Greenhouse

The beginning phase

The first phase of the plan—and the project for 2013, Kate said—is the current renovation of the large bed of shrubs and trees on the west side of the Lunar Lawn. Three years ago a large horse-chestnut there was blown down, damaging other plants; also, the soil was wet all the time. When existing plants were dug out and the area was excavated to about three feet, a broken clay pipe that was constantly leaking water was found. New

drainage pipes were laid, old roots were removed, and the soil was abundantly amended with pine fines, which last longer than any other kind of enrichment, Robinson said. Some of the existing plants were replanted and new plants were brought in, including cherry trees, hydrangeas, and groundcover.

By this September, we will decide what work will be done for 2014, Kate said. Rodney added that Hillwood's horticultural staff are already doing some of the editing of the plantings that needs to be carried out.

Mrs. Charles commented that in Mrs. Post's time, Hillwood was really a one-season garden, a spring garden, plus the fall coloring and the mums, and that now we're talking about a garden for four seasons. We have to remember, she said, that Mrs. Post was a very progressive woman, and she would welcome the kind of changes in the gardens that are being proposed.

The full presentation can be viewed online at <http://volunteer.hillwoodmuseum.org>. Click on Education, then Lecture Video Archives, and then 2013 Lecture Videos. Follow the instructions at the top to access "Behind Hillwood's Changing Gardens."

UPCOMING EXHIBITION: *PASSION OF THE EMPRESS: CATHERINE THE GREAT'S ART PATRONAGE*

*Lynn Rossotti,
Director of Marketing and Communications*

A dazzling array of decorative art in gold, silver, porcelain, and enamel reveals the power and patronage that marked the reign of Catherine the Great, one of Russia's foremost art collectors and shrewdest political and cultural leaders.

Driven by a thirst for knowledge and a quest for the throne, Catherine propelled herself to the role of Empress through the sheer power of her

intellect, cunning, and resolve. For thirty-four years, she reigned over a golden age of Russian culture, founding what would become the State Hermitage Museum and transforming St. Petersburg into one of Europe's cultural centers. *Passion of the Empress: Catherine the Great's Art Patronage*, on view in the Dacha February 15 to June 8, 2014, presents a selection of finely-crafted decorative art pieces to explore how the famous tsarina masterfully blended traditions of Byzantine art with the Western neoclassical style that was a hallmark of the Enlightenment.



Portrait of Catherine the Great

With the stunning *Buch Chalice* as the centerpiece, twenty-seven works from Hillwood's Russian imperial art collection form the foundation of the exhibition. Other lenders to the exhibition include the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Walters Art Museum, Dumbarton Oaks, The Birmingham Museum of Art, and private collections.

When she took the throne in 1762, Catherine was determined to change the perception of Russia throughout Europe as a culturally lacking empire. Having lived at court since 1744, when she became engaged to the future Peter III, while educating herself about Russian culture, language, and the Orthodox Church, Catherine quietly developed her own sense of style. Her immersion in Russian tradition did not preclude the savvy Empress from maintaining ties with Western Europe. Correspondence with the French

philosophes in particular eventually strengthened French taste in Russia and enabled Catherine to foster the arts, science, and education.

Though she is best known for collecting thousands of paintings, Catherine commissioned splendid metalwork, porcelain, glasswork, and books for her own use and as gifts for courtiers. It is in these objects that the blending of Byzantine and classical influences shows Catherine's desire to forge a new direction for Russian culture and align it with the West. Many of the objects in the exhibition bring focus to Catherine's use of ancient and medieval carved cameos and intaglios and her incorporation of those into her commissions for new works of art. The empress not only shared the Enlightenment sentiment that carved gems were important pieces of the past, but she was also aware of the power associated with the practice of collecting cameos.



Buch Chalice

The most exquisite example of this intermingling is the *Buch Chalice*. Commissioned in 1790, Iver Windfeldt Buch produced two liturgical sets, each comprising a chalice and several other pieces necessary for celebrating the Divine Liturgy. To construct the sets, Catherine provided Buch with gold and diamonds from the State Treasury and carved gems representing scenes from the life of Christ, saints, and angels, which came from her private collection. Of the gems, a thirteenth-century Byzantine cameo of the Archangel

Michael is the oldest. The remaining ones are mostly contemporary. Catherine presented a set, including this chalice, to the Trinity Cathedral in the Aleksandr Nevskii Monastery in St. Petersburg on August 29, 1791.

Other highlights of the exhibition include a glass cameo of *Catherine II in the Guise of Minerva*, based on a Siberian jasper cameo carved by Catherine's daughter-in-law, Maria Feodorovna, depicting Catherine as the goddess Minerva wearing a helmet decorated with a winged sphinx crown and laurel wreath; a late 17th-century censer that is one of the most stunning examples of metalwork in Hillwood's collection; and pieces from the *Orlov Porcelain Service*, the expansive set made at Catherine's request by the Imperial Porcelain Factory for Count Grigory Grigoryevich Orlov (1734-1783).



Orlov Porcelain Service

The exhibition was organized by the Georgia Museum of Art (titled *Exuberance of Meaning: The Art Patronage of Catherine the Great*). A full-color catalogue accompanies the exhibition with essays by organizing curator Asen Kirin, associate professor of art and associate director of the Lamar Dodd School of art at the University of Georgia, and Dr. Scott Ruby, Hillwood's associate curator for Russian and Eastern European Art.

GARDEN PROFILE: HILLWOOD'S CUTTING GARDEN

Ann Stevens Kelly, Garden Volunteer

With the special exhibition *Living Artfully: At Home with Marjorie Merrinweather Post* on at Hillwood now, it seems especially fitting at this time to highlight Hillwood's cutting garden which provided beautiful flowers for the Mansion when Mrs. Post was in residence and still does today.

Jason Gedeik, head of greenhouse and design operations, says: "The cutting garden is a cornerstone of our horticulture heritage and tradition here at Hillwood, and we are proud to maintain something Mrs. Post originated during her time – providing fresh flowers for weekly floral arrangements." It is part of Hillwood's "living tradition," he says, "doing things here that were done decades ago."

Mrs. Post stipulated in her will that there should always be fresh flowers and orchids in the Mansion. During the growing season members of her house staff would cut flowers daily for arrangements displayed throughout her Hillwood residence.

"The cutting garden is a functional garden as opposed to a display garden," says Drew Asbury, greenhouse and cutting garden grower. "Its primary function is to produce cut flowers, which makes it automatically different from any other garden at Hillwood."

"Over the years it has evolved, shifted, changed and diversified," Asbury says, "but it has always been in the same location at Hillwood." When Mrs. Post purchased Hillwood in 1955, clay tennis courts were located in the area where the cutting garden is now. It is conveniently located opposite the entrance to the greenhouse, and it is mostly in full sun and close to the kitchen side of the Mansion.



View of the Cutting Garden across from the Greenhouse

Since the cutting garden is on the same level as the Mansion, a low stone retaining wall marks the periphery from west to east on the north side. On the south side a flagstone path leads from the Mansion to the administration building. Beds of annual flowers decorate the top of the retaining wall and edge the flagstone pathways.

The well-tended Cutting Garden has 21 straight rows for growing flowers with mulched paths between each row, and two wide paths that cut across the garden and intersect in the middle. Two tall trees, a *Ginkgo biloba*, on the north side, and a *Pinus strobus* (white pine) on the west side, and the two *Chamaecyparis obtusea* ‘Crippsii’ flanking the steps on the north side provide additional interest in the landscape of this garden.



Rows of flowers in the Cutting Garden

This summer alone one can find 50 different kinds of flowers being grown in the cutting garden from early spring to late fall. Numerous

different cultivars of many of these flowers are grown to provide a wide range of colors, notably among the yarrows, asters, plume celosia, gladioli, lisianthus, globe amaranth, sunflowers, and zinnias. The number one requirement for a flower to be in the cutting garden, Asbury says, “is that it will be able to last a full week in an arrangement so it always looks fresh for visitors.”

The calendulas grown this spring unfortunately didn’t pass the test for lasting well in an arrangement and were replaced with long stemmed gladiolus plants. This Old World plant of the iris family is named for a small sword referring to its leaf shape. This year Hillwood is growing 20 different gladiolus cultivators, and 35 to 40 of each cultivar are planted once a week from April 15th to mid-August. It takes gladiolus plants approximately 10 weeks to bloom.

Since many lilies are used in arrangements for the Mansion, one to two crates of different cultivars of lilies are grown in the Greenhouse each week. Space in the Greenhouse at times is at a premium because it is used for growing the seasonal display plants and seedlings for the Cutting Garden while housing the tropical plants orchid collection. The production Greenhouse is effectively used for 10 months with June and July somewhat dormant for cleaning and sanitizing.

Snapdragons, an old-fashioned favorite, flourished in the Cutting Garden this year. Snaps are an excellent crop to grow in the Greenhouse, Asbury says. Last winter many crops of Greenhouse snaps were grown with successive sowing and were placed in the Cutting Garden in the spring. They produced many blooms until early July when they ceased growing well once Washington’s summer heat kicked in. He also grows the rocket series of snapdragons for summer production in the garden. The snapdragon, *Antirrhinum*, gets its name from its fancied resemblance to a dragon’s face.

Perhaps the most popular and special flower grown in the Cutting Garden for many years is

the elegant rose-shaped lisianthus. This annual from the genus *Eustoma* grows on tall straight stems that branch with multiple flower heads and is available in a variety of wonderful colors, including shades of pink, purple, yellow, green, blue and white. Some cultivars are even bi-colored and can last for weeks in a floral arrangement.

Since they are very slow to grow from seed, Hillwood buys lisianthus plugs—plants a half-inch tall, and grows them from these established seedlings. “We grow eight different cultivars,” Asbury says, “250 of each. The lisianthus takes up more space, three rows, than any other plant in the Cutting Garden.” The first crop of lisianthus, called lizzies here, went into the Cutting Garden April 1st for blooming by mid-June, and the second crop was planted May 1st for blooming in mid-July.



Asiatic lilies, yarrow, zinnias, craspedia, and bakers fern in the Visitor Center

Zinnias are one of the most spectacular flowers of the summer season in this region, and having a bouquet of multi-colored zinnias to look at brightens a day. The tall, sturdy-stemmed, vividly colored zinnias growing this year in the Cutting Garden are just lovely, and Hillwood has grown two crops of them. The first crop started from seeds in the Greenhouse in April was planted in mid-May for flowering mid-June. The second

crop is planted in mid-July for flowering mid-August.

Near the middle of the Cutting Garden a large patch of sunflowers of various heights and coloration come into their mid-summer glory. And, as late summer approaches, the important fall crop of dahlias will show off their richly colored flowers in the Cutting Garden, lasting until frost. Their tubers were overwintered in the bulb room and planted in late spring.

One of the biggest challenges in managing the Cutting Garden is to not only have flowers blooming all the time, but to stagger blooms of each crop. Various techniques are used to do this including using the refrigerator to create a dormancy for some seedlings, starting seed at 2-week intervals, cutting back half of certain crops and planting bulbs at different times.

Virtually all of the chrysanthemum cuttings taken mid-May to mid-June are now rooted and being potted by volunteers in July. Disbudding plays a key role in creating big and beautiful mums for the autumn flower arrangements at Hillwood. Constant daily attention is required for this labor intensive process done mostly by volunteers who remove side buds from a plant to promote bigger blooms from the remaining buds.

The first director at Hillwood, Roy Bentley, being from England, had a love for roses and the Cutting Garden in the 1980s was devoted entirely to roses, about 400 hybrid teas. It reportedly took about an hour each day to deadhead them. These were used for cut flowers in the Mansion and other flowers were grown in beds in front of the Greenhouse. By the late '80s, the Cutting Garden included a wider variety of flowers with less space devoted to roses. The area in front of the greenhouse was used for mum production for the fall garden until it was changed to lawn in about 2003.

During the extensive restorations at Hillwood in the mid-1990s, the Cutting Garden underwent

renovation of its irrigation and electrical systems and revamping of its flagstone pathways. After Hillwood's major restoration work was completed in 2000, it was realized that more flower arrangements would be needed each week at Hillwood for the new Visitor Center, increasing the need for more flowers from the Cutting Garden.

The needs of the Cutting Garden were the driving force to start the volunteer program at Hillwood, according to Bill Johnson, horticulturist/volunteer coordinator. In 1992, he found that the care of the garden required more staff than was available, so he urged Fred Fisher, Hillwood's second executive director, to start a volunteer program. Johnson tested it with 10 people in '93 and started a full program with 29 volunteers in the garden, Greenhouse and Library and 10 Garden Docents in 1994. Today volunteers are involved with all aspects of Hillwood's horticultural program assisting with: the production of fresh flowers, the creation of floral designs, the care of orchids, the Greenhouse and the plants and shrubs in the gardens. Interpretation volunteers also help in with Visitors Services, lead tours of the gardens and Mansion, and assist with Membership.

The Cutting Garden is always a special attraction for visitors because it is a garden space not seen in many public gardens. As they wander through the paths, visitors can see the same flowers growing in the garden that they saw used in arrangements in the Mansion, the Visitor Center and the Café. In the Cutting Garden's peak time, June through October, the arrangements at Hillwood contain 100 percent Hillwood-grown flowers.

Gedeik notes that "we continue to grow some of Mrs. Post's favorite flowers like the zinnias, and we are bringing back the growing of delphiniums. Last fall we overwintered delphinium seedlings in the cold frame and planted them in March. This fall we will save any plants that make it through the summer to have a head start on next year's crop. We are also growing tuberose for the first

time in many years. Mrs. Post's daughter Dina Merrill had strands of tuberose in her bouquet for her first marriage, so we are interested in growing them here at Hillwood."



Tuberose

"It is the goal at Hillwood," Asbury says, "to have a high percentage of the cut flowers here grown from seed." The exception will be the lisianthus and those plants grown from tubers and cuttings. Asbury joined the Hillwood staff last November to choreograph the Greenhouse growing and Cutting Garden initiatives.

The western end of the Cutting Garden includes exciting display beds of hybrid tea roses, climbing roses, peonies and perennial flowers with the shasta daisies a special highlight just now. A small flagstone terrace with wooden benches is in this area under the shade of the pine tree for visitors to sit, as I've done, and simply enjoy the beauty of these flowers.

KUDOS AND CALLS FOR VOLUNTEERS

Lisa Leyb, Interpretation Volunteer Manager

French Festival

Hillwood welcomed over 1,300 visitors for French Festival on Saturday, July 13 (one of our highest attendance records for this festival)! Guests enjoyed activities ranging from music and dance performances to a hands-on art project. The support from our volunteers is one of the key components for a successful program. Thank you

for making another memorable experience for our visitors! A heartfelt thank you to all who helped with French Festival:

Janice Brambilla	Essie Horton
Kris Clark	Wilhelmina Irshad
Victoria Cordova	Oksana Klebs
Rosemary Coskey	Susan Lund
Kevin Davis	Irene Malbin
Raisa Dubensky	Betsy Muri
Gale Dugan	Yani Partowardojo
Ferial Fallah	Chris Ritthaler
Ken Garrison	Ilse Stauffer
Phyllis Gerstell	Kathryn Thoreson
Donna Graif	Kevin Tomaine
Carolee Heileman	Joan Weiss
Sally Herren	

Orchid Collection Database

From the 1970's until recently, record keeping for the orchid collection had been done in a ledger and on note cards. The ledger contained the plant names and date. The note cards had some information about bloom time, division and repotting. Late in 2006 a team of volunteers began entering the note cards into a data base. The primary volunteers working on this project were Prabhdeep Chawla, Lyndon Navera, Sharon Juergens, Janice Wamstad and Sylvia Del Valle.

In 2010 Chris Brook began volunteering with the orchid collection. Chris had been working with the Smithsonian Horticulture Division on their orchid collection database before joining Hillwood. He brought a wealth of knowledge and with the help of our IT Department revamped the existing database. Chris spent about 550 hours entering new data fields and checking to make sure each plant in the collection was in the new system. He still comes in to update new accessions and de-accession failing plants.

Calls for Volunteers

Join your fellow volunteers and staff members for **Hillwood's 12th Annual Gay Day on Saturday, September 28**. This year's program features family activities, social events, and much more!

Volunteer assistance is needed in the Visitor Center, Mansion, and with the special programming and activities. Please contact Lisa Leyh at (202) 243-3938 or LLeyh@HillwoodMuseum.org if you are interested in helping.

Fall Garden Tours

The fall garden touring season begins on Tuesday, September 3 with garden tours offered Tuesday through Saturday at 10:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. and at 2:30 p.m. on Sunday, September 15 and 29, October 13 and 27, and November 10. Saturday, November 16 marks the end of the fall garden touring season. We'll be in touch with the Garden Docents in August with information to prepare you for the coming fall season.

2014 Mansion Docent Training

Mark your calendars! A Mansion Docent Training Program will take place in 2014 from January – June. Applications will be available later this summer. Stay tuned for more details...

NEW VOLUNTEERS

We are delighted to welcome fifteen new volunteers to Hillwood. Joining Interpretation are Calla Pearce, Marina Naydenova, Lana Ekimoff, Kristen Sieck and Suzanne Demarest. Joining Horticulture are Theresa Giannavola, Neill Heath, Thoko Moyo, Christy Wallover, Dana Boyd, Vicki Pedrick, Mary Whalen, Crystal Varkalis, Everett Boyd and David Guerra.

IN MEMORIAN: JOHN PALMER

Kate Markert, Executive Director

The First Vice President of Hillwood's Board of Trustees, John Palmer, died on August 3 at George Washington University hospital after a short illness. John and his wife Nancy have been long-time close neighbors on Linnean Avenue.

NBC News said in a statement: "John was a brilliant, brave, and tireless journalist who guided

viewers through many of the most significant events of the past half-century - from the days of the civil rights movement through the tragedy of 9/11...He covered five presidents and traveled to every corner of the world, always showing the empathy and compassion that helped set him apart. His kindness is remembered by all of us, and it built lasting bonds throughout our news division. "

At the White House press briefing on August 5, Press Secretary Jay Carney said, "Before I take your questions, I just wanted to note that on behalf of all of us in the press office, from the President on down, we want to express our condolences to the NBC family and to the Palmer family at the loss of John Palmer, who was truly one of the greats, in my view -- a wonderful man, a terrific reporter, and someone who was as old-school as you could get, and just decent to the core."

John was the chair of the buildings and grounds committee and a great friend to Hillwood. He will be greatly missed by the board, staff, volunteers, and all who knew him.

A memorial service for John Palmer will be held on Saturday, August 10 at 4:00 p.m. at St. Patrick's Episcopal Church, 4700 Whitehaven Parkway NW, Washington DC 20007. A reception from 5:00-8:00 p.m. will be held at Hillwood following the service.

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