

## **Hillwood Estate, Museum & Gardens**

### **Retired Garden Audio Tour Stop 500. Restoration in the French Parterre**

The recent restoration of the parterre garden involved intensive detective work with countless hours of research in the Hillwood Museum and Gardens archives, interviews with longtime employees of the landscape architects, Innocenti & Webel, and an excavation of the existing garden almost like an archaeological dig.

In 1997, more than forty years after its construction, the garden was showing severe signs of age and degradation. The limestone water channels and curbstones for the beds were cracking and flaking. Under the garden, the drainage system had collapsed. Some of the statuary was badly weathered – the previous limestone swan fountain could not withstand Washington's changes in temperature and humidity. Over time, numerous attempts had been made to make repairs and to prevent further damage.

In the most recent restoration, the French parterre was rebuilt from the foundations up. A new drainage system, waterworks, and limestone were installed. In the three pools, Italian glass tile, that more closely matched the original, replaced the ceramic tile that had been installed after Mrs. Post's death. The swan fountain was painstakingly reproduced in durable Tennessee pink marble, by Constantine Seferlis, a noted local sculptor, and has now regained its former glory.

All the plants had to be removed before the infrastructure could be rebuilt. The four parterres were replanted with the original "border boxwood," and the terrace beds surrounding the terrace have been filled, as they originally were, with azaleas, arborvitae, juniper, and yew, enlivened by seasonal flowering plants. Behind the fountain, ivy was reintroduced on a custom designed trellis system to prevent it from compromising the structural integrity of the mansion.