

Please enjoy reading this month's volunteer newsletter featuring news and updates from the Hillwood staff.

## OCTOBER 2024 SCHEDULE

The October 2024 schedule is now open to all interpretation volunteers in Volgistics, complete with private tours and special events. Please log in to your [Volgistics account](#) to schedule your shifts. If you have any changes or questions regarding the volunteer schedule, please continue to contact [volunteers@hillwoodmuseum.org](mailto:volunteers@hillwoodmuseum.org). Thank you.

[Log into Volgistics](#)

## PILOT PROGRAM: MANSION DOCENTS ON-STATION FOR HIGH VISITATION DAYS

Thanks to the remarkable support of our volunteers, Hillwood has set record-breaking visitor numbers. In 2023, we welcomed over 105,000 visitors, setting a new attendance record. We are on track to meet or exceed that milestone in 2024. A notable trend emerging this year is the increase in general visitation days that exceeded 1,000 visitors—a number previously seen only on special occasions like Mother's Day or pre-COVID festivals, such as Fabergé Egg Family Festival.

As we monitor this growth, concerns about guest comfort and collection safety have arisen. Between April and May, six weekends averaged 1,225 visitors per day, prompting Security and Collections to share their concerns regarding the safety of the collection. One step Hillwood is taking to ease congestion in the entry hall is removing the [commode](#) (31.15), located near the coat room. We will notify volunteers when this change occurs.

While many docents have adapted well to these crowded conditions, some have voiced concerns about the challenges of giving tours in a noisier, busier mansion. A working group representing several Hillwood departments have cultivated a number of programs to pilot, including experimenting with on-station docents for a selection of anticipated high visitation days to gather hard data on if this strategy is an efficient and valuable way to manage crowding while continuing docents' stellar visitor engagement.

[On select dates this fall](#), we will experiment with scheduling mansion docents to be on-station in the mansion in lieu of guided tours. Our hope is that as mansion docents freely rove from room to room, they can safely engage with a larger number of visitors.

This pilot program is a work in-progress, and we value volunteer insights and feedback that help inform and refine our approach. Additional updates regarding on-station guidelines will be sent to mansion docents. Once launched, Hillwood will deploy a variety of tools to evaluate the effectiveness of this test, including a mansion docent survey. Any other information regarding the pilot will be shared with all volunteers by email and posted on the volunteer website. Thank you for your support as we work together to assess our growing visitation!

## FALL GARDEN TOURING SEASON: PILOTING LATE AFTERNOON TOUR, FRIDAY-SUNDAY

We are thrilled to have our garden docents back touring in the gardens for the fall season! Docent-led garden tours will be available now through Sunday, November 10. Garden tours will be offered at 10:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m., Tuesday through Sunday during the fall.

We are also piloting a third garden tour this fall. In September, Hillwood is offering garden tours at 1:30 p.m., Friday through Sunday. In October and November, we will offer garden tours at 2:30 p.m., Friday through Sunday. For more information, please visit the [2024 Garden Touring Season Information page](#) on the volunteer website.



*Hillwood's Lunar Lawn, photography by Erik Kvalsvik*

## SUPPORTING OUR VOLUNTEERS: INSIGHTS FROM THE 2024 VOLUNTEER ENGAGEMENT SURVEY

At Hillwood, our volunteer management team is committed to ensuring that our volunteers feel supported, empowered, and fulfilled in their roles. In alignment with this goal, we recently conducted a comprehensive volunteer engagement survey, open from mid-June to early September. This survey aimed to gather valuable insights on how we can further enhance the overall volunteer experience at Hillwood.

We are grateful for the 173 volunteers who participated, providing feedback that will shape future improvements and help us maintain a thriving volunteer community. Moving forward, we plan to conduct this survey annually to track trends, assess progress, and continuously improve our volunteer program. [Click here to read the insights from the 2024 volunteer engagement survey.](#)

## SECOND SUCCESSFUL SUMMER WITH BLOOMBERG ARTS INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

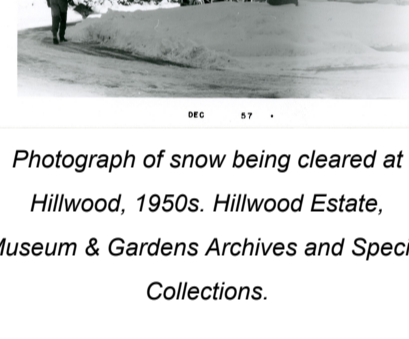
This summer, three highly motivated and skilled rising high school seniors participated in a seven-week internship at Hillwood. From working with our Horticulture team in the gardens to preparing mannequins for display with our curators, these three emerging professionals have contributed to projects at various stages and have seen the variety of work that goes into creating a meaningful experience for Hillwood's visitors. [Please enjoy this article from Head of Youth Audiences Rebecca Singer](#) about this summer's high school interns and their contributions.



*Hillwood's three high school interns, Marla, Stephen, and Taylor, on the last day of their internship.*

## MOVING HOUSE: TRANSITIONING BETWEEN POST'S PROPERTIES

As Marjorie Merriweather Post changed residences on a seasonal basis, significant coordination amongst members of her staff was required for successful transitions. First-hand accounts of her staff as Post's staff members, across her different properties of Mar-a-Lago, Camp Topridge, and Hillwood, illuminate their important year-long roles. [Please enjoy this article from Head of Archives & Special Collections Jason Speck](#) for insight on the efforts that went into Post's movement between her different properties.



*Photograph of snow being cleared at Hillwood, 1950s. Hillwood Estate, Museum & Gardens Archives and Special Collections.*

## HILLWOOD IN THE NEWS

*The Washington Post* reviewed the special exhibition *Fragile Beauty: Art of the Ocean* on August 14. [Read it here!](#)

## HORTICULTURE HAPPENINGS

### Garden Update

Horticulture staff and volunteers have been busy with several projects addressing lawn restoration and erosion control. Also, the time is coming soon to change out the seasonal display beds from summer to fall. [Click here to learn more from Director of Horticulture Jessica Bonilla.](#)



*Change out for fall begins September 23.*

### Staff Update

Horticulture is happy to announce the addition of two new gardeners to the team:

Hugo Frost started as a full-time staff member on May 16 after being in a seasonal role since February. He was already familiar with Hillwood prior to his employment through his interest in art and Russian history. Hugo developed a passion for working outdoors through his family and then later as a groundskeeper at a retired horse farm in Massachusetts. More recently, he led a team for the Rocky Mountain Youth Corps in Colorado, completing environmental projects for various government entities and installing miles of walking and bike paths. He also volunteers at the Temperance Alley Garden and has a Bachelor of Arts degree from Hamilton College.



*New gardener Hugo Frost*

Marina Pariser started in a seasonal position on June 3 and has now joined the team as a full-time gardener. Marina just graduated in May from Oberlin College of Arts and Sciences with a bachelor's in Environmental Studies, concentrating on urban agriculture. During her time there, she worked for the school to tend various orchards and gardens along with being a part of their state-of-the-art wastewater treatment system, Oberlin Living Machine. Marina also interned at an urban garden in Hobart, Tasmania. While there, she was responsible for daily garden chores and harvesting produce.



*New gardener Marina Pariser*

## UPCOMING VOLUNTEER EDUCATION

Mark your calendars for these upcoming volunteer educational sessions:

### Volunteer Garden Tour and Plant ID Walk

**September 17, 18, 19, 20 (Tuesday-Friday) 10:15 a.m.-10:45 a.m.**

Join Gardener Section Manager Sarah Bass on a garden tour and plant ID walk as she highlights plants that beautify the early fall garden. Tours will depart from the cold frames near the greenhouse at 10:15 a.m. Group size limited to 15 volunteers per tour. Please use the links below to sign up for a tour:

- [September 17 Volunteer Tour](#)
- [September 18 Volunteer Tour](#)
- [September 19 Volunteer Tour](#)
- [September 20 Volunteer Tour](#)

### Volunteer Lecture: Houseplants 101

**October 2 (Wednesday), 10:15-11:45 a.m.**

Are you interested in adding a new houseplant or two to your collection? Some houseplants are no brainers, while others can be a bit tricky. Join Andrew Bedenbaugh, orchid and tropical specialist, in this informative lecture and discussion highlighting the wide diversity of houseplants available. Lecture presented in the Dina Merrill Pavilion and capacity is limited to 25 volunteers. Please use the link below to reserve a spot:

- [October 2 Volunteer Houseplant 101 Lecture](#)

### Volunteer Tour: Specialty Chrysanthemums

**October 22, 23, 24, 25 (Tuesday- Friday), 10:15 a.m.**

Join Greenhouse Grower Jarrett Currin on a greenhouse tour and marvel at the fascinating diversity of chrysanthemums. Tours will depart from the horticulture breakroom at 10:15 a.m. Group size limited to 15 volunteers. Please use the links below to sign up for a tour:

- [October 22 Volunteer Chrysanthemum Tour](#)
- [October 23 Volunteer Chrysanthemum Tour](#)
- [October 24 Volunteer Chrysanthemum Tour](#)
- [October 25 Volunteer Chrysanthemum Tour](#)

## VOLUNTEER PROGRAM RECORDINGS

Don't miss out on our robust lineup of volunteer lectures and programs of 2024! If you were unable to attend a virtual volunteer program, check out our [2024 Lecture Videos Page](#) to catch up with the recordings. Please note that the 2024 Lecture Videos page on the volunteer website now has a link to [Hillwood's YouTube Library](#). In lieu of adding duplicate videos to the volunteer website, we hope you enjoy watching public programs, such as lectures and workshops, on Hillwood's YouTube channel.

## STAFF HELP & RESOURCES

Thank you for being a part of the Hillwood community! Our doors are always open. Feel free to reach us at [volunteers@hillwoodmuseum.org](mailto:volunteers@hillwoodmuseum.org).

-The Volunteer Support Team

Jordan Hansen, Lisa Leyh, Drew Asbury, and Samantha Hernandez

### PLAN YOUR VISIT

Learn more about Hillwood's current visitor offerings, book an upcoming visit, and stay up-to-date on Hillwood's events and programs.

[Visit >](#)

### STAY CONNECTED

Visit the volunteer website for an archive of past monthly volunteer newsletters and catch up on any reading you may have missed.

[Connect >](#)





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